

WEDNESDAY, 6 AUGUST 2025

ESTIMATES—PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE— NATURAL RESOURCES AND MINES; MANUFACTURING; REGIONAL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr Speaker (Hon. Pat Weir, Condamine)

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Jon Krause, Scenic Rim)

Committee Members

Mr SA Bennett MP—Chair

Mr NJ Dalton MP

Mr RI Katter MP

Mr GR Kelly MP

Mr JR Martin MP

Mr TJ Smith MP

Mr LP Power MP

Members in Attendance

Hon. CR Dick MP

Dr CAC Rowan MP

In Attendance

Hon. DR Last, Minister for Natural Resources and Mines, Minister for Manufacturing and Minister for Regional and Rural Development

Ms Ally Foley, Chief of Staff

Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing and Regional and Rural Development

Mr Graham Fraine, Director-General

Mr Gobind Kalsi, Executive Director, Reform Strategy and Delivery Lead

Department of Transport and Main Roads

Ms Sally Stannard, Director-General

The committee met at 8.59 am.



Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Krause): Good morning. I declare this hearing of estimates for the Primary Industries and Resources Committee open. I acknowledge the Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people of this state and their elders past, present and emerging. I also acknowledge the former members of this parliament who have participated in and nourished the democratic institutions of this state. Finally, I acknowledge the people of this state, whether they have been born here or have chosen to make this state their home and whom we represent to make laws and conduct other business for the peace, welfare and good government of this state.

My name is Jon Krause, and I am the member for Scenic Rim and Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. Under the provisions of the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001, I will preside over today's hearing. The members of the Primary Industries and Resources Committee are:

Mr Stephen Bennett, the member for Burnett and chair of the committee; Mr James Martin, the member for Stretton and deputy chair of the committee; Mr Nigel Dalton, the member for Mackay; Mr Robbie Katter, the member for Traeger; Mr Glen Kelly, the member for Mirani; and Mr Tom Smith, the member for Bundaberg. Mr Linus Power, the member for Logan, will substitute for the member for Bundaberg between 9 am and 11 am. The committee is joined by other members who have been granted leave to attend and ask questions at the hearing today.

I remind everyone present that any person may be excluded from the proceedings at the Deputy Speaker's or Speaker's discretion or by order of the committee. The committee has authorised its hearing to be broadcast live, televised and photographed. Copies of the committee's conditions for broadcasters of proceedings are available from the secretariat.

Staff who are assisting our witnesses here today are permitted to use personal electronic devices in the chamber. I ask all present to ensure phones and other electronic devices are switched to silent mode or turned off if not in use. I also remind members about this.

The House has determined the program for the committee's estimates hearing. Today, the committee will examine the proposed expenditure contained in Appropriation Bill 2025 for the portfolios of the Minister for Natural Resources and Mines, Minister for Manufacturing and Minister for Regional and Rural Development and also the Minister for Primary Industries later today. I remind honourable members that matters relating to these portfolio areas can only be raised during the time specified for the area, as was agreed by the House. I refer members to the program set by the House, which is available throughout the chamber and on the committee's webpage. This first session will examine the proposed expenditure of the natural resources and mines portfolio until 11 am. We will suspend proceedings for intermission from 11 am until 11.15 am.

I remind everyone that these proceedings are subject to the standing orders and rules of the Legislative Assembly. In respect of government owned corporations and statutory authorities, standing order 180(2) provides that a member may ask any question which the committee determines will assist it in its examination of the relevant Appropriation Bill or otherwise assist the committee to determine whether public funds are being efficiently spent or appropriate public guarantees are being provided.

On behalf of the committee, I welcome the minister, the director-general, officials, departmental officers and members of the public. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask officials to identify themselves the first time they answer a question referred to them by the minister or director-general. Please remember to press your microphones on before you start speaking and off when you are finished.

I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of natural resources and mines open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Minister for Natural Resources and Mines, if you wish, you may make an opening statement of no more than five minutes.

Mr LAST: Thank you. As the Minister for Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing and Regional and Rural Development, I am proud to lead a portfolio that stands at the core of our state's economic strength, supporting the hardworking mining families who power Queensland. This year's budget delivers a total of \$595.2 million across the natural resources and mines, manufacturing and rural and regional development portfolios, with targeted investments that will grow our economy, boost innovation and create regional jobs.

Over the last eight months, my department and I have maintained a laser-like focus on delivering the certainty and stability that industry needs, that Queenslanders expect and that was so lacking under the previous Labor government. When we came to government we were presented with a resources sector shaken by uncertainty. The former government's unpredictable anti-mining, anti-gas and anti-coal policies sent investor confidence off a cliff. Project approvals had been left to gather dust, and Queensland's reputation as a place to do business had taken a serious hit.

From day one, my focus has been to restore confidence, cut delays and rebuild trust with the industries that underpin our economy. In my first fortnight I met with Glencore's global CEO, Gary Nagle, to chart a sensible and sustainable path forward for Mount Isa, and this engagement has been ongoing ever since. We have an offer on the table and we are working collaboratively with the federal government to see a resolution for that community.

I have established the Resources Cabinet Committee to get investment moving and cut red tape that has held up job-creating projects for too long. Through the RCC, we are doing the hard work to deliver faster, clearer decisions without compromising safety or environmental standards. We have

appointed Ken Singer as the interim Commissioner for Resources Safety and Health, and we have launched a comprehensive review into Resources Safety & Health Queensland. The review is an important stocktake to ensure Queensland's regulatory framework delivers the best safety outcomes for the hardworking Queenslanders who work in our resources sector.

We are backing mining exploration to unearth the next wave of mineral opportunities across Queensland, with a \$5.1 million investment in targeted geoscientific activities, and we are stepping on the gas with the release of nine new areas for gas exploration across the Cooper-Eromanga and Bowen-Surat basins. Importantly, two of the nine tender areas will have the Australian market supply condition applied to them to ensure a portion of this gas is supplied to the domestic market.

We are also progressing the development of the Queensland Resources Common User Facility in Townsville, with \$8.5 million in operational funding for the critical minerals processing hub. In the land space, we have delivered relief to those affected by the North Queensland floods by deferring leasehold rents for primary producers, businesses and residents recovering from the disaster, and we are addressing the cost-of-living pressures on Queensland farmers by capping rent increases for leasehold primary production tenures at 10 per cent. We are also taking decisive action to restore Double Island to its full potential by converting the site of the former resort to state owned freehold land, and we are delivering a record \$117.8 million in funding for natural resource management groups to deliver on-ground environmental outcomes across Queensland.

The Crisafulli government is focused on delivery. We are delivering for the mining families who keep the lights on in Queensland and the high-vis heroes who were invisible to the former government. We are delivering the certainty, investment and commonsense decisions that Queensland needs for a secure economic future. I thank the committee for its work, and I look forward to the committee's questions.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister, for your opening statement. We will move into non-government questions first. Deputy Chair?

Mr MARTIN: Director-General, is it correct that Mr Ian Davies has been engaged by your department?

Mr Fraine: Good morning, committee. In relation to your question regarding Ian Davies, I can confirm the following: the Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing and Regional and Rural Development have engaged Mr Davies through Elementa Strategies to provide strategic analysis for us with regard to the north-west region of this state. People know that we are focused on North-West Queensland and the North West Minerals Province—a space the size of Victoria, a space the size of five Tasmanias—both, as the minister mentioned, in terms of negotiations with Glencore and, more broadly, with regard to the future of the North West Minerals Province. Mr Davies, through the engagement he is undertaking with us, is providing specialist analysis to support government in identifying sustainable solutions—

Mr POWER: So it is correct?

Mr Fraine: Yes, member for Logan. As I am saying, he brings—

Mr POWER: I have a question to follow up—

Mr BENNETT: Mr Deputy Speaker, point of order: I am really interested in hearing—

Mr POWER: It starts already.

Mr BENNETT: You asked a question and I would like to hear the answer, if I may.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Burnett. Member for Logan, you were raising a point of order and seeking to ask a question. I do not need your interjections directed at other members. Thank you, Director-General. I would ask the member for Logan to ask his question.

Mr POWER: Director-General, did you initially recommend that Mr Davies be engaged?

Mr Fraine: Mr Davies was engaged as a result of conversations between me and the minister about people who are well qualified and well engaged in the mining industry in this state and would be of benefit for the work that we required done.

Mr POWER: Just confirming: the minister actually recommended Mr Davies for the role?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member, that question has an inference in it, but I will allow the director-general to answer it.

Mr Fraine: As I stated, the move to engage Mr Davies came from conversations that we had with regard to the skill set we needed for the work we are doing around the north-west and more specifically that we are looking at doing in Mount Isa.

Mr POWER: Fantastic. Was that position advertised?

Mr Fraine: Just by way of background for committee members, Mr Davies brings a decade of leadership in both the energy and the resources sectors in this state, having facilitated transformation of a lot of things in the space that he has worked in. We engaged Mr Davies to undertake this work on a contract.

Mr POWER: It seems the answer is very obvious. Was there a merit selection panel for the position Mr Davies now holds?

Mr Fraine: Just to clarify: he is not holding a position—

Mr POWER: He is not holding a position?

Mr Fraine: He does not hold a position with my department.

Mr POWER: He is not in the department?

Mr Fraine: Correct.

Mr POWER: Who funds him, then?

Mr Fraine: We have engaged him on contract for the work that we have asked him to do.

Mr POWER: The department has engaged him?

Mr Fraine: Correct.

Mr POWER: Were you aware at the time of these discussions with the minister that Mr Davies had donated \$2,000 to the LNP before the October election?

Mr Fraine: As I have stated, Mr Davies has been engaged as he brings over a decade of leadership in Queensland's energy and resources sector. The skill set he brings to the table is, from a departmental perspective, what we are seeking.

Mr POWER: Perhaps I was not clear. Could I clarify the question?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, and maybe ask it without any imputation or argument as well.

Mr POWER: I will try to. At the time, it was known from public documents that Mr Davies had donated to the LNP. Was there any conflict management or any issues at the time of his engagement?

Mr BENNETT: Mr Deputy Speaker, point of order: relevance to the Appropriation Bill. I question the relevance of that line of questioning.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: One moment, member for Burnett.

Mr POWER: I might add for clarification that we also need to know how much the department is paying him, which obviously is relevant to the appropriations.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order from the member for Burnett so continue your questions, member for Logan.

Mr Fraine: Coming to the first part of your question, certainly at the time he was engaged Mr Davies was provided a conflict-of-interest declaration and he did not declare any conflict of interest relating to work that he has done. He has a conflict-of-interest management plan.

Mr POWER: Despite being an LNP donor?

Mr Fraine: To the second part of your question, he has been engaged for a value \$187,500, excluding GST.

Mr POWER: For what time period?

Mr Fraine: For a time period of up to 25 days.

Mr POWER: I turn now to stakeholder consultation. I note from the minister's diaries that he does not meet with stakeholders without you being present. On that basis, have you been witness to any discussions between the minister and stakeholders indicating that progressive coal royalties would be up for discussion after 2028?

Dr ROWAN: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker: I think the question relates to policy matters and would be more appropriately addressed to the minister. I seek your guidance with respect to that.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you for your point of order. That may not be a point of order. However, member for Logan, I do point out that you are asking about a matter which is beyond the forward estimates of this budget. Could you explain how this is relevant to this appropriation if you are asking about a royalty matter which would be beyond 2028?

Mr POWER: There are four-year forward estimates.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, and you have asked a question about a policy matter beyond the forward estimates.

Mr POWER: That is right. Have there been any discussions in this period about budget measures beyond the forward estimates?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: How is this relevant to this year's budget and the forward estimates?

Mr POWER: I can rephrase it. Has there been any discussion about beyond 2027?

Mr Fraine: To the first part of your point around engagement with stakeholders, yes, this minister has been very clear about his expectations for me as director-general and for our department to be engaging with stakeholders across the resources industry and across our entire portfolio. To the point of involvement that I have in those meetings and engagement with stakeholders, as I said, that is a clear expectation.

To the second part of your question, in those meetings the minister has been very clear, as this government has stated publicly, that the royalties regime is in place. I am certainly not a part of conversations around any changes to royalty regimes either now or in the future. That is a matter that is primarily undertaken at an officials level through Queensland Treasury and the Treasurer.

Mr POWER: I am seeking to table a document. This is not for the following question, but I did not want to delay the committee unnecessarily so this is for future questions.

Mr MARTIN: My question is to the director-general. To clarify: separate from your meetings with the minister, has your department consulted with resource and mining stakeholders on progressive coal royalties potentially being wound back after 2028?

Mr Fraine: To speak to the first part of the question, certainly as an agency, not only from a regulatory perspective but also from a general industry perspective and an investment perspective, we spend a fair bit of effort on engagement across all commodities in the resources sector. To come to the finer point of your question, I am not in any engagements with the sector or stakeholders within the sector around future royalties regime elements and design.

Mr POWER: Director-General, I have just tabled a media article from the *Townsville Bulletin*. I note it mentions a closed door coal industry meeting. Did you attend the meeting with the minister where the minister asked—and I quote from the article—“to address “the elephant in the room” and to axe the tiered coal royalties”?

Mr Fraine: Forgive me, member. I am not trying to dissemble here.

Mr POWER: No. I understand you were just answering a question. I wanted to get that article to you.

Mr Fraine: My eyes are not brilliant. Could you please point out where that is in the article?

Mr POWER: It is in the second last column.

Mr Fraine: In meetings I have been in, the minister has been very clear that the royalties regime stands as per this government's public statements.

Mr POWER: I understand. Director-General, at that closed meeting did the minister commit to—and I quote here from the article the words of the minister—arrangements that work for everyone to reduce progressive coal royalties?

Mr Fraine: To the degree that I have recollection of that specific meeting, the minister has been very clear on two things: one is that there are a range of pieces that government will look at around generating investment into the resources sector. Approvals, for instance, is one of them. We have been asked to look at reform across a number of government agencies around approvals. That is an example of when there is a quote around ‘meets everyone's expectations’ it is looking at how we get a modern, efficient and effective approvals system in place.

Mr POWER: I believe he was asked about ‘the elephant in the room’ and to axe tiered royalties. That is what the article is suggesting.

Dr ROWAN: Point of order.

Mr Fraine: Yes. As I mentioned in response to a previous question—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Just a moment, Director-General. What is your point of order, member for Moggill?

Dr ROWAN: Again, I would reference my previous point of order with respect to these policy matters which are being asked. The director-general has been responsive now to a number of questions around that. He has provided a good response to the issues that have been canvassed. I submit to you again that in relation to some of the hypotheticals that are being put and the policy matters that are being canvassed that it is more—

Mr Power interjected.

Dr ROWAN: I am sorry, Deputy Speaker. I thought there was an inappropriate interjection. I am submitting to you that these questions should be submitted to the minister.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Moggill, for your point of order. Member for Logan, some of these questions are straying very close to policy matters. The director-general has been responsive. I wanted to take the director-general back to your previous question. The question you asked related to comments in the article about ‘a model that “meets everyone’s expectations”’. The director-general was outlining some matters in relation to approvals and other matters that he was referencing but the question was not—

Mr POWER: My point was that the article made clear that they were talking about—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Logan—

Mr POWER: No. I am making a point of order. Point of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: What is your point of order?

Mr POWER: My point was that the article makes clear that they were talking about progressive coal royalties. The response was—and I am sure it was easy to say in a room full of coalminers—‘We’ll have arrangements that work for everyone.’ It was definitely regarding that issue.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is not a point of order; you are making a statement.

Mr POWER: I apologise.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Logan, the point I was making is that the director-general, in my view, had not completed his response when you interrupted him. He was addressing the issue about ‘a model that “meets everyone’s expectations”’, which is broader than just royalties. Director-General, did you have anything further to add?

Mr Fraine: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker—only to repeat that, in regard to what was raised around progressive coal royalties, the minister was clear that the coal royalties regime as it currently stands will continue in line with public statements made. To one of the points raised, anything beyond that is not a matter I am able to speculate on.

Mr POWER: I turn to the minister. Before you made the statement regarding progressive coal royalties and you discussed changes that work for everyone, had you discussed them with either the Treasurer or the Premier?

Mr LAST: One of the first tasks that I did upon becoming minister was to establish the Resources Cabinet Committee, a committee that I chair comprising members including the Deputy Premier from a planning perspective, the Treasurer and the Minister for the Environment, with the ability to co-opt in as required depending on the agenda the Minister for Primary Industries and the Minister for Water.

That committee has a very clear role, a very clear task, and is achieving goals already in terms of reducing timeframes, having a look at where the hurdles, where the obstacles, are in the approval process. If we have a look at the last greenfield coalmines in Queensland—Pembroke’s Olive Downs—it took 12 years from start to finish. I am not satisfied with that timeframe. That is too long. Time is money. One of the primary roles of our Resources Cabinet Committee is to look at how we can streamline that approval process. How do we work with our mining companies, our resource companies, to make that a little bit easier?

Mr POWER: Point of order: the minister may not have been aware, but I specifically asked about arrangements that work for everyone only regarding axing the tiered royalties. I appreciate the answer and I will have questions about that later, but I am asking specifically about discussions on axing the tiered royalties.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is your point of order on relevance?

Mr POWER: It is absolutely on relevance. This is not relevant to the specific question I asked.

Dr ROWAN: Point of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Logan, if in the future you could simply state your point of order without making a statement supporting it, it would be appreciated.

Mr POWER: My apologies and I appreciate your guidance.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister, I understand you are being relevant to the Resources Cabinet Committee. There was another point of order down the end. Are you letting it go?

Dr ROWAN: The point of order I was going to make was the direction that you ended up giving to the member for Logan.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Moggill. Minister?

Mr LAST: I have been very clear that the current coal royalty regime will remain unchanged. That message has been communicated on a number of occasions.

Mr POWER: Well, that is not the message they got in Townsville. I want you to answer—

Dr ROWAN: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker: you have already given direction to the member for Logan to not have additional commentary. There have been previous rulings by the Speaker in relation to those matters as well that were provided yesterday. I would ask for consideration to be given—

Mr POWER: Point of order: respectfully that was part of my question. I am about to lead on to the part of that question.

Dr ROWAN: I was not finished my point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr POWER: My apologies.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please continue, member for Moggill.

Dr ROWAN: I ask you to consider that matter with respect to the member for Logan's commentary.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Speaker did make a ruling yesterday relating to statements outside of questions and arguments across the table. I would request you please to state your questions without argument, inference or imputation as per the standing orders and we will get through things better.

Mr POWER: Thank you for your guidance. It was part of the context of the question. Respectfully, I will try to moderate myself. Just as a yes or no question, Minister, will you commit there will be no changes to progressive royalties at any stage under the Crisafulli LNP government? This is your chance for clarity.

Mr BENNETT: Point of order: it is a hypothetical. It is talking about future policy direction. I question the relevance to the Appropriation Bill.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Burnett, for your point of order. Member for Logan, I am advised there is an aspect to that question that is hypothetical but you may wish to ask it again in a different way that removes the hypothetical nature of it.

Mr POWER: Is it the policy of your department and the Crisafulli government that there will be no changes to progressive coal royalties at any stage under the Crisafulli LNP government?

Mr BENNETT: Again, point of order.

Dr ROWAN: Again, point of order.

Mr POWER: How can I ask a question about policy if it is a hypothetical question?

Mr BENNETT: Point of order, Deputy Speaker: I suggest if he wanted to talk to Treasury they could have done that earlier in the budget estimates process.

Dr ROWAN: Point of order, Deputy Speaker: I think there are some aspects to the line of questioning under standing order 115 which is argumentative or standing order 112 as well. Also, there remain hypothetical aspects provided in the question as well. I submit to you that it needs to be rephrased again.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Logan, I will allow the question. The minister will respond as he wishes about policy direction.

Mr POWER: I note that I asked for a direct 'yes' or 'no' on this.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Logan, it is not for you to determine how questions are answered—

Mr POWER: I just asked for it; I am not saying I am getting it.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Logan, I was speaking to you. You are constantly interrupting me and other speakers in the chamber. Please stop doing that. It is up to the minister how he answers the question. As long as the minister's answer is relevant, it is in accordance with the standing orders.

Mr LAST: The matter of coal royalties sits within the Treasurer's ambit and, of course, cabinet deliberations.

Mr POWER: You have no role whatsoever. I will turn to a new area. Director-General, in relation to Glencore, is it correct that the government was first made aware the smelter and refinery were at risk of closure in February?

Mr Fraine: As I spoke to earlier, the question around Glencore and Mount Isa is part of a broader set of considerations that many areas of government are giving to the future of not only the resources sector in that part of the world but also the communities in that part of the world. We have seen over time the growth of Mount Isa and some of the issues it is facing now. I think government has been aware for some time across a number of years of some of the challenges facing Mount Isa. Glencore, in their discussions with successive governments now, have put timeframes on the table around both the closure of—

Mr POWER: My question was about February.

Mr Fraine: Yes. In terms of a specific date, as I say, I think Glencore has been discussing with government for some time now the dates associated with both the mine and some of the issues concerning other parts of the lease. Member, to the point of February, if there is a specific reference you are making to February, during the course of this session I am certainly happy to have a look and understand if there are any specific communications they have had with us around that February date.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Director-General, you may want to come back to that. I do not know if you want to add anything more at this point, but we are going to government questions.

Mr POWER: I have a series here on this important issue for Queensland.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: We can come back to it. You have only asked the first one, haven't you?

Mr POWER: No, I have asked two—no, one question.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: We will come back to you, member for Logan. We will go to government questions now. Member for Burnett?

Mr BENNETT: I will hand over to the member for Mackay.

Mr DALTON: Can the minister please update the committee on his work to support the Mount Isa and Townsville communities following multinational commodity trader Glencore's announcement that it is considering closing the Mount Isa copper smelter and the Townsville copper refinery?

Mr LAST: This is an issue that I am devoting a lot of time and resources to. This is an important issue. It is a critical issue not only for Mount Isa but for Townsville as well. The indication by Glencore that they intend to close that smelter has a domino effect. Incitec Pivot, the fertiliser plant there, relies on the acid produced from that smelter for its operation, and the anodes that are freighted through to the Townsville copper refinery generate employment at that particular premises as well. Due to the commercial-in-confidence nature of the ongoing discussions it would be inappropriate for me here today to discuss the specifics of Glencore's request, but I can say that we have tabled an offer with Glencore.

This particular issue was one of the very first issues I dealt with upon becoming minister. The Premier and I have had a number of meetings with Gary Nagle, the CEO of Glencore. There have been numerous meetings with Glencore since that time. The department, led by my director-general, is having ongoing discussions at officer level not only with Glencore but also with the federal government. The federal minister, the Hon. Tim Ayres, Minister for Industry and Innovation and Minister for Science, joined me in visiting Mount Isa in June of this year. We went out there and toured the site. We met with staff and senior management on the premises. It is clear that there is a need to put in place a package which secures the future of that smelter. I have made it very clear to Glencore and the Commonwealth government that there is a necessity here for all three parties to work cooperatively and collaboratively on this particular issue.

I can also say that since 30 June officials, led by the director-general, have had eight meetings with the Commonwealth regarding Glencore's operations in Mount Isa. I am heading to Sydney this afternoon to attend the national smelter summit, where I will also be meeting with Minister Ayers to conduct further discussions in this space. This is a serious issue. I am aware the clock is ticking and we need to come up with a package that meets the requirements of everyone and secures the future of the Mount Isa community. I want to acknowledge the advocacy of the member for Traeger in this space as well, because it is a great concern to him and certainly to the mayor and broader Mount Isa community.

I can also announce that the government has secured a commitment from Glencore to allow third-party access to copper tailings at its Mount Isa mine site, so that will generate much needed jobs in that space. I can also announce that Glencore has committed to progressing its Black Star Open Cut project, which is on its current lease, with feasibility studies already underway in that space.

We have also recently announced that Queensland Rail will introduce an incentive package to reduce access charges on the Mount Isa rail line, providing significant savings for emerging rock phosphate producers, and is expected to increase freight volumes and support new entrants in the market.

The Resources Cabinet Committee will facilitate the delivery of any outstanding approvals or information required to move Harmony Gold's Eva copper project towards construction. We have a situation where we have a number of copper mines in development stages right throughout that North West Minerals Province. Our challenge is to keep that smelter operational while those mines come online. Harmony Gold's Eva copper project is significant and we are doing everything we possibly can.

This is where the benefit of the Resources Cabinet Committee comes into play. That committee is working to streamline an approval process to provide whatever assistance we can to ensure those projects are getting off the ground as soon as possible, because we want to reduce that timeframe. We are working very hard with Glencore and the federal government. My department has diverted a lot of resources to this issue and it is something that we are committed to resolving.

Mr DALTON: With reference to the key deliverables listed on page 1 of the Service Delivery Statements where it says the government will 'increase gas supply in Queensland by expanding investment opportunities', can the minister please outline the steps he is taking to achieve additional gas supply in Queensland?

Mr LAST: The Crisafulli government is committed to removing delays and streamlining approvals to ensure Queenslanders continue to reap the benefits of our world-class gas resources. Since the commencement of the Crisafulli government, I have granted 15 petroleum leases within the state of Queensland—many of those in my first few weeks as minister. Upon taking office, I found a stack of old applications and approvals on my desk, some of them dating back to 2019. It just goes to show what was happening under the watch of the previous Labor government.

Our message has been that we are open for business. Gas is a good news story in Queensland. We have plentiful reserves in that space, and we are working very cooperatively and collaboratively with all of our gas resource companies to bring those online. I recently announced in May the opening up of nine new tenements for gas, totalling 17,000 square kilometres. Importantly, two of those tenements have been reserved for domestic use, so we are making sure that we have a sufficient supply of gas in Queensland. They talk about the 'east coast gas crisis'; I call it the 'southern state gas crisis' because in Queensland we do not have a gas crisis. We have plentiful reserves of gas; we have plenty of gas being produced. It is providing much needed jobs, it is underpinning our economy and it is providing an export market for this state as well. When you have that gas coming online, that will help to drive down energy prices.

Mr DALTON: Minister, the Mackay region is a major contributor to the mining and resources sector, with thousands of our residents employed throughout the Bowen Basin and beyond. Can the minister outline any actions taken to improve safety in the resources sector and protect local miners?

Mr LAST: Safety in our resources sector is of paramount importance to me, and the Crisafulli government is committed to restoring confidence across the resource industry in terms of that safety framework and how we make safety in the resources sector a priority. In April 2025 I announced a comprehensive review into the state's health and safety regulatory model of Resources Safety & Health Queensland, RSHQ, and appointed an Interim Commissioner for Resources Safety and Health, Mr Ken Singer. He is very experienced, highly commended and well respected right across the industry.

I also point out that the position of the Commissioner for Resources Safety and Health had been left vacant by the previous government for almost a year. It is such an important role. This is the role that reports to the minister about safety issues in this state. The Commissioner for Resources Safety and Health advises me as the minister on safety and health matters through engagement with the resources sector, reviewing and reporting on the performance of RSHQ and chairing the tripartite statutory safety and health advisory committees for the mining and quarrying sectors. It is an important role.

RSHQ operates as an independent statutory body which means it is separate from my department and has complete operational and administrative independence. RSHQ and the regulatory model it operates within has been in place for five years. The review that I announced presents a timely opportunity to look at the model's effectiveness in facilitating the protection of the safety and health of persons in Queensland's resources industry. It commenced on 9 June this year and will focus on evaluating the effectiveness of the current regulatory model and exploring whether an alternative model is necessary to ensure better resources safety and health outcomes. The review is being led by Professor Susan Johnston, a respected practitioner from the University of Queensland with wideranging experience across the resources sector. Professor Johnston brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise, having spent more than 25 years working to improve mine safety outcomes in Queensland and across the globe.

To further improve safety in the resources sector, in May of this year the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Deb Frecklington, and I announced that respected barrister Wayne Pennell will become Queensland's inaugural Mining and Resources Coroner. The Coroners (Mining and Resources Coroner) Amendment Bill 2025 is currently being considered by your committee, and I look forward to the debate in parliament when that bill comes up later this year. The Mining and Resources Coroner will give answers to families who have lost their loved ones and it will make recommendations to improve safety and health. It is an important role. Some of these fatalities that occurred in our resources sector are now three or four years old and those families still do not have answers or closure. We owe it to those families to have an inquest and to give them the answers they have been looking for.

I will also touch on the terms of reference regarding the review and what it will look at. The terms of reference include: the role of RSHQ as the regulator, and the relationship of this role with other related parties in the model—that is, the Office of the Work Health and Safety Prosecutor; the role of the Commissioner for Resources Safety and Health; the existing sector specific advisory committees; the effectiveness of establishing an advisory council or board to provide strategic advice and direction to the regulator; the recommendations of the project management office, including those in relation to the establishment of an advisory council and the role it would play; the extent to which the current regulatory model is consistent with good practice as it relates to safety and health improvements; and any other relevant current or potential oversight mechanisms.

Mr DALTON: With reference to the budget highlights on page 2 of the Service Delivery Statements where it details '\$8.5 million in 2025-26 to support preparation for operation of the Queensland Resources Common User Facility', can the minister outline how this will assist companies in North Queensland with their operations?

Mr LAST: We are putting our money where our mouth is. This is an important facility. This is a facility that clearly demonstrates that we are serious about developing our resources sector while also staying abreast of new developments, particularly in the critical minerals space. I am pleased to advise that construction has commenced on the Queensland Resources Common User Facility, or QRCUF as it is known, which will be Australia's first common user minerals processing facility located at the Cleveland Bay Industrial Park in Townsville. The facility is scheduled to be operational in late 2026. Queensland company Sedgman has been appointed as the managing contractor to deliver that facility.

Queensland has some of the world's richest mineral-producing areas, with major deposits, particularly in that North West Minerals Province area, of copper, lead, zinc, nickel, cobalt, tungsten, graphite, vanadium and silica, as well as silver, phosphate and rare earths. These are highly sought after and this area has an abundant reserve of those particular minerals. This government is open for business, as I have said, and we are committed to supporting the development of critical mineral projects through accelerated exploration, extraction, processing as well as growing or value-adding processing initiatives. This facility will cement the place of Queensland as a player in the future of the global economy and as a trusted partner in the production of critical minerals.

I have always said that there are two things that we need to talk about here. We talk about potential; I want to talk about production. It is one thing to have these minerals and these reserves in

that North West Minerals Province, but it is about how we bring those reserves into production. What we want to do and what my department is working closely with industry on is how we value-add. Rather than just shipping concentrate and ore overseas for processing, we need to look at how we can do that in Queensland because that is where the value is and that is where the jobs are. This facility will enable us to do exactly that.

In addition to the capital budget, my department received an allocation of \$8.5 million as part of the 2025-26 state budget to prepare for operations. This allocation is in addition to a 2024-25 state budget allocation of \$1.995 million for operational readiness planning, increasing the total allocation to \$10.5 million. To date, \$31.4 million has been spent in capital purchases and a further \$67.6 million has been allocated for 2025-26, representing a total of \$99 million in capital expenditure. It is the first common user demonstration-scale facility of its kind delivered for Australia and the Asia-Pacific. This is a facility, particularly in the vanadium space, that will allow those companies to gauge how their mineral can be processed and what they can produce. It is a good news story, and it is ideally located at Townsville where they have access to port facilities et cetera.

Mr DALTON: With reference to the key deliverables listed on page 1 of the Service Delivery Statements where it says the government will 'drive supply chain development to grow our economy and support Queensland communities', can the minister detail any initiatives that support the north-west region?

Mr LAST: Since coming to office, the Crisafulli government has been taking action to drive new investment in the north-west of Queensland. I recently announced that Queensland Rail will introduce an incentive package to reduce access charges on the Mount Isa rail line, providing significant savings for emerging rock phosphate producers, and it is expected to increase freight volumes and support new entrants into the market.

The Resources Cabinet Committee that I chair will also facilitate the delivery of any outstanding approvals or information required to move Harmony's Eva Copper Mine Project towards construction. Harmony Gold have advised that the project will deliver 800 jobs during construction and 450 long-term jobs during operations. I have also been speaking to the Commonwealth on how we can jointly address the issues in the north-west. I referred previously to my visit to Mount Isa with Minister Ayres where we certainly discussed the issues faced by the north-west. When we talk about the development of that area, there are two critical elements—that is, energy and water, underpinned by infrastructure such as roads and rail. If you cannot put a tick in those two boxes then you are up against it. We are putting a lot of time and resources into the energy and water space, because if we can provide that to these resource companies, giving them that assurance that we are moving forward in that space, that gives them the confidence to invest and develop these projects. It is only one thing to have these projects going ahead.

Let me give you an example. Eva Copper have estimated it will cost them \$1.2 million a week in diesel to run a generator when they start that mine because they do not have access yet to the network. That is something we are mindful of, and it underpins why it is so important that CopperString goes ahead and we get that energy and power out into the north-west area of Queensland.

The actions certainly build on the support packages for workers and the community. The support package contains up to \$30 million to accelerate development of resource projects in the North West Minerals Province. The projects selected for acceleration include the Eva Copper Mine Project, which I mentioned, North West Phosphate's Paradise South project and Vecco Group's Critical Minerals project. Additionally, all three of these projects have now been declared prescribed projects after the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure and Planning announced on 30 May this year that the PhosOne project is a joint venture between North West Phosphate and Sibanye-Stillwater/Century operation. The declaration supports the three projects' continued development approval process and recognises the long-term strategic value the three projects have in terms of supporting regional employment and economic contribution to the north-west.

There was an additional \$20 million for an economic structural adjustment package to fund 10 key projects planned to support almost 500 local jobs in Mount Isa, and we have also just committed \$5.1 million to enhance mineral exploration to help identify new resource opportunities across Queensland.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: We will go to non-government questions again.

Mr KATTER: Minister, referring to page 4 of the SDS, the administration of Queensland mines, the copper mine in Mount Isa ceased production last week. Can you confirm if you have signed off an amended approved mining plan which has no copper mining in it?

Mr LAST: Sorry, could you repeat that question, member for Traeger?

Mr KATTER: Can the minister confirm if he has signed off on an amended approved mining plan which has no copper mining in its future?

Mr LAST: Member, I am not aware of that, but I will certainly come back to you before the end of today's session with some further information regarding that.

Mr KATTER: What we are after is whether you signed off, consciously saying, 'We are shutting it down'—or that company is going to shut it down. That leads me to the next question. Minister, how do you define sovereign risk as it relates to legislative options for forcing the sale of the MIM lease?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Traeger, that is asking the minister for an opinion about something, which is not in line with standing orders. If the minister wants to respond he can, but for future questions, member, refrain from seeking an opinion, please.

Mr LAST: The continued operation of Mount Isa Mine, the continued operation of the smelter, is absolutely crucial—crucial for that community, crucial for the north-west and crucial for a lot of jobs not only in Mount Isa but also in places like Townsville. Certainly in our discussions with Glencore and with the federal government, we have stressed how important it is that those assets remain operational. We cannot afford to have that smelter shut down. Certainly, Glencore have indicated through access to their tailings at that mine site by third parties and also the feasibility studies of the Black Star open pit that there are continued opportunities in that space and on that particular lease at Mount Isa.

We are still very heavily involved, as you would appreciate, in negotiations with both Glencore and the federal government. As I said previously, I am travelling to Sydney today to meet with the federal minister and to attend the national smelter summit. I have absolutely no doubt that the issue you just raised will be the subject of discussion at that summit. As we know, across Australia there are a number of smelters that are in trouble at the moment and certainly there is a wider discussion, but it is an important discussion.

Mr KATTER: I appreciate that answer, Minister. The point I was trying to make and lead to is that, despite what Glencore is saying about future prospects of maybe doing Black Star, 1,200 jobs have gone and it has ceased, and there is a mining company sitting on a mining lease while there are other companies that want to buy that and keep it operating. When we are advocating that we want to promote mining in the state, why, then, are we not considering legislative options around forcing them to sell the lease if they are not going to partake in mining operations on that lease? To pre-empt the answer, what I was getting at with sovereign risk is that people say that creates sovereign risk, but it is only activated by buyers coming—

Dr ROWAN: Point of order, Deputy Speaker: whilst I have the deepest respect for the member for Traeger, there is a lengthy commentary leading up to the question as asked. It is a lengthy preamble.

Mr KATTER: I understand. I will try to keep it brief. I am just trying to help out the minister.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: You did ask a question amongst that statement, member. I wonder if you want to put that question to the minister.

Mr KATTER: Why is the government not considering legislative options to force that sale, or will it be considered in these discussions, noting that sovereign risk is usually identified as the major impediment?

Mr LAST: The Premier has been very clear that he expects Glencore to be a good corporate citizen in its actions in Mount Isa and Queensland more broadly. Queensland has been very good to Glencore and we expect Glencore to be good for Mount Isa. From 1990 to 2024, Glencore sold around 984 million tonnes of Queensland coal, generating more than \$130 billion in revenue. Further, from 2022 to 2024 Glencore's Mount Isa mining operations reported—

Mr POWER: Point of order, Deputy Speaker: I was interested in the question, which was about legislative options—

Mr LAST: I am getting there.

Mr POWER: Well, you are not.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Logan?

Mr POWER: Relevance.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister, if you could come back to the point of the question. I understand sovereign risk is a broad issue—the whole thing is a broad issue—but there is a point to the question as well.

Mr LAST: From 2022 to 2024, Glencore's Mount Isa mining operations reported \$13.375 billion in sales of copper, zinc, gold and silver. The Mount Isa community as you would appreciate, member for Traeger, needs certainty. Whilst the government will not rule in or out actions it may take in the future if it considers Glencore is not acting as a good corporate citizen, at this time discussions with Glencore have been productive. Ensuring Glencore continues to invest in Queensland is not only in our best interest but it is also in the best interest of those who are employed by and impacted by Glencore's operations in this state. That is why I am committed with working with Glencore and the community to find an outcome that benefits all parties and keeps jobs, people and the thriving community in Queensland's north-west alive. I have been very clear and very up-front in my discussions with Glencore in my discussions with them—the DG will attest to this. It is our expectation that we keep that mine and that smelter operational.

Mr KATTER: I first learnt of the name Mr Ian Davies today. He is an industry adviser involved in the dealings with the copper smelter or copper mining. Could the minister outline what experience Ian Davies has in base metals and mineral processing in the north-west?

Mr LAST: Mr Davies brings over a decade of leadership in Queensland's energy and resources sector, having facilitated the transformation of Senex Energy from a junior miner in the Cooper Basin with one employee to a critical east coast natural gas producer with hundreds of employees. He has been working alongside our department to provide analysis that informs the development of solutions to restore confidence and drive new investment in the North-West Queensland region. He is very well respected. He has worked right across this state. He has an in-depth knowledge, a comprehensive knowledge of the resource industry in Queensland. It is that knowledge and expertise that he has brought to the table.

Mr KATTER: That is fine. I respect his competency but to be clear: he has no experience of base metals in the north-west?

Mr LAST: Mr Davies has worked across this state in a number of roles. I would have to dig up his CV to see where he started. He has worked over many decades across this state but I assure you, member for Traeger, that the knowledge and experience that he is bringing to the table is invaluable.

Mr POWER: So it is 'no'.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Logan, that is out of order.

Mr POWER: Apologies. I thought it was under my breath.

Dr ROWAN: Mr Deputy Speaker—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Moggill, do you have a point of order?

Dr ROWAN: I think that is a reflection back on the chair.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member, ask your question and cease all the extraneous chatter that you have been engaging in all morning.

Mr POWER: I will do my best.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: No, I am not asking you to do your best; I am asking you to cease what you have been doing. Ask questions to the minister or the director-general and refrain from other activity which the Speaker made clear in his ruling yesterday he is not going to tolerate.

Mr POWER: Director-General, is it correct that after that initial risk in February, Glencore provided a financial model for the future operations in April?

Mr Fraine: To clarify an earlier comment, the original announcement by Glencore in regard to their underground copper mine concentrator was in 2023 but certainly, yes—

Mr POWER: We are talking about the smelter, not the underground?

Mr Fraine: Yes, thank you. I was just clarifying from that earlier question, member. In regard to the negotiations we are having with Glencore and the discussions with the Commonwealth government, it is correct that we have been provided by Glencore with modelling in regard to a number of elements around the smelter.

Mr POWER: You have had that since April. When did your department or the minister first officially write to the federal government minister seeking assistance directly on this issue?

Mr Fraine: There have been discussions and communications of a range of natures between the state and the Commonwealth government for a number of months.

Mr POWER: Right. So, is it correct then that the first and final offer of assistance from the state government came five months after Glencore first wrote to the minister and eight weeks from the smelter's Red Vic deadline in October?

Mr Fraine: As I stated, there have been a range of meetings, a range of communications and a range of discussions over many months now. The minister mentioned earlier the number of engagements for instance that we have had with the Commonwealth which is—as of yesterday, to update one of your figures—10 engagements and meetings with the Commonwealth. Certainly, in terms of engagement with Glencore, I have been in around the same number of meetings, interactions and going back and forth with Glencore over negotiations since the time I have been in this role.

Mr POWER: We saw yesterday that the federal government in coordination with the South Australian and the Tasmanian governments had put cash packages on the ground, so hasn't this month of inaction put 17,000 jobs on the line?

Dr ROWAN: Point of order, Deputy Speaker: that is a leading question and I would ask that it be rephrased.

Mr POWER: I am happy to rephrase. Director-General, has your department modelled the impact of 17,000 workers losing their jobs?

Mr Fraine: As I stated in earlier responses and as the minister has spoken to, the value of the smelter and the broader supply chain is very well known. In fact, the minister mentioned some figures earlier. Government—both previous and current—know the value of the smelter and the broader operations at Mount Isa. That has been the basis of the ongoing discussions that we have had with both Glencore and the Commonwealth in regards to what may be on the table for consideration in regard to the smelter.

Mr POWER: There is not a lot of clarity here. Can you please outline what exactly has been offered to Glencore by the Queensland government? We have some awareness of payroll tax deferrals but I am trying to get the full picture for the people of Mount Isa.

Mr Fraine: Sorry, was that question for me or the minister?

Mr POWER: That was to you, my apologies.

Mr Fraine: That is okay; I just wanted to be clear. Of course the nature of what is in the package is subject to both government consideration and commercial-in-confidence discussions between the parties and it is not something I am at liberty to discuss in this forum.

Mr POWER: Minister, can you guarantee that all of the incentives offered to Glencore will be honoured by your government?

Mr LAST: In our negotiations with Glencore, part of the offer that we have tabled comes with a commitment from this government that we will deliver on what we have put on the table. We are absolutely serious in our negotiations with Glencore. This is a serious issue. The future of a community and the many thousands of jobs which rely on that particular industry are at risk. It is something that we are devoting, as I said before, a lot of time and resources to. The offer that we have put on the table has been carefully researched. It was put on the table in good faith. Glencore have taken that offer and are currently considering that particular offer at the moment. As I said, I am flying to Sydney this afternoon to talk to the federal government and the minister regarding federal government assistance and what they might bring to the table as well, but it needs to be a package. We understand that. You have no faith in your federal colleagues?

Mr POWER: No, I have no faith in you because you have let it go for months, but you put that question to me and we need to answer—

Dr ROWAN: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr BENNETT: Mr Deputy Speaker, I think this is a classic example of why Queenslanders have asked us to change the estimates process. It has been calm and methodical up until today and I think this is exactly why it was changed.

Mr POWER: Is there a point of order?

Mr BENNETT: Absolutely—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please stop. Member for Logan, I have cautioned you a number of times. I am cautioning you again in the strongest possible terms to not interrupt when I am hearing another point of order, making a ruling or giving a direction. Member for Moggill, did you have a point of order?

Dr ROWAN: My point of order is that the member for Logan's conduct is disorderly and provides evidence to Queenslanders why the estimates process needed to be changed.

Mr MARTIN: He was responding to the minister's attack.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes. I will take that from the member for Stretton. Minister, there is no quarrelling across the table. You are here to answer questions. Member for Logan, please continue asking questions in an orderly manner.

Mr POWER: Thank you for your guidance, Mr Deputy Speaker. I regret engaging in the exchange. Now we are going to see that there are packages in place for two other smelters in the country. As you go and get dragged down to a summit with the minister, you are going to be the odd state out, aren't you?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member, that question contains an imputation. Could you ask it without the imputation, please?

Mr POWER: I turn to the director-general on coal royalties. Director-General, have you provided the minister or his office any advice on options to save the 500 jobs at risk if Bowen Coking Coal shuts?

Mr Fraine: Just to clarify, the question is on royalties in relation to that?

Mr POWER: It is about the risk of Bowen Coking Coal shutting and what advice the department has prepared.

Mr Fraine: In terms of the situation with Bowen Coking Coal, we are of course keeping a close eye on that situation. We note that McGrathNicol have been appointed as the voluntary administrators. We note that, as Nick Jorss, head of Bowen Coking Coal, has mentioned in media today, at this point the operation is still running to a degree under the operators. It is not at full capacity, but it has not been operating at full capacity for a time. From our perspective as the Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing and Regional and Rural Development, we obviously have an interest in this space and will brief our minister with regard to the status. In terms of the point of your question with the link to coal royalties, the management and payment of royalties and/or deferrals or anything in that space operates through the Queensland Revenue Office in the portfolio of the Treasurer.

Mr POWER: Thank you very much. I turn to the minister. As has been pointed out, the issue is that the Treasurer has not deferred the royalty payments owing for Bowen Coking Coal. Minister, have you let the Treasurer pull the plug on a major Queensland mine?

Mr BENNETT: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker: that is a leading question with an inference.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Logan, there is an imputation in that question. Do you have another question for the minister or a rephrased question?

Mr POWER: Certainly.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: One that relates to his portfolio?

Mr POWER: Respectfully, we have had considerable evidence from the minister about the cabinet subcommittee of which the Treasurer—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Sure. Proceed with your question.

Mr POWER: Minister, will you be providing Bowen Coking Coal with a rescue package as you have in Glenden?

Mr LAST: We certainly work with all our resource companies and the last thing we want to see is a resource company going into administration. It is heartening to know that the Burton Coal Mine is still operational even though it is under administration and that a significant number of employees have retained their job as a result of that particular move going forward. The continued operation of that mine, given that it is in administration, is a matter between Bowen Coking Coal and the administrators.

Mr POWER: No package?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member, I think your question has been answered.

Mr MARTIN: Minister, following on from that, are you aware of any other operators like Rio Tinto that have reached out for support?

Mr LAST: We are in—and my diary will show this very clearly—constant communication. I have a significant number of meetings with resource companies across the spectrum, whether they are coal, minerals, gas or quarries, on an ongoing basis. It is important that those meetings and that consultation continue. Those meetings are productive in terms of what we can do to develop the resource sector in

this state which emerged from 10 years of being battered under the previous Labor government. We are absolutely committed to growing the resource sector in Queensland and we will continue with our resource companies going forward.

Mr POWER: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker: the minister may have missed the bits about others that have reached out for support.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: No, I will ask you again: is your point of order relevance?

Mr POWER: It is absolutely about relevance to the question that the member for Stretton asked.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for Stretton asked a question whether anyone else had reached out for support. That is a very broad-ranging question and the minister is being relevant to that question, but I think he was about to wrap up anyway.

Mr LAST: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. When it comes to the operations of Rio Tinto and their mining operations, there has been no request for assistance with regard to their mining operations in Queensland.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: We are going to go to government questions now.

Mr G KELLY: Can the minister please update the committee on any connections that have been facilitated between investors and Queensland resource companies following his trade mission to the United States and Canada earlier this year and how this will progress the critical minerals sector?

Mr LAST: Trade missions enable Queensland to pursue new investment and are a key mechanism for government to highlight why Queensland is an attractive investment destination. The 2025 North America resources investment mission included a visit to the Prospectors & Developers Association of Canada convention, otherwise known as PDAC, in Toronto as well as visits to Washington DC and New York. The cost of the mission was \$117,497. The trade mission successfully collected intelligence on policy incentives offered by different countries and showcased Queensland's critical minerals to a range of government entities, tier 1 mining houses and large multinational capital investment firms.

I am pleased to say that the mission was a short, intense and incredibly productive investment by the department that will continue to pay dividends for many years. Over eight days the delegation held 45 meetings across three cities. We formed very strong relationships with the US Export-Import Bank, the governments of Alberta and Ontario and the European Commission, and we formed high-level connections with major Queensland investors including ConocoPhillips Australia, Rio Tinto, Jorgmec—Japan Organization for Metals and Energy Security—and Santos, to name a few. Importantly, we formed new productive relationships with other major investors including Blackstone, Baramulti Group and Hartree investments and we conveyed our commitment to Queensland's open-for-business approach with major mining houses including Newmont, Agnico Eagle, Vale Base Metals and Alxar. The time and investment in the trade mission is already paying off. My discussions with the US Export-Import Bank and the ongoing support from my department have opened the door for several priority projects here in Queensland.

On 27 June this year EQ Resources announced Exim has progressed negotiations with them to provide a \$34 million financing facility to support the ongoing development of their projects in Queensland, supporting the supply of tungsten to the United States. Other Queensland companies—Vecco Group, Graphinex and RZ Resources—are also progressing discussions with Exim and other investment firms on financing facilities and equity investments for their projects facilitated by the trade mission. I recently received correspondence from the CEO of Graphinex—and I have a copy here if the committee would like to see a copy—Mr Art Malone, thanking me and my department on our efforts during that trade mission. Mr Malone stated—

The introduction to the United States EXIM Bank ... has been a significant step forward. Additionally, the Office's—the Queensland Critical Minerals office—

thoughtful engagement with another international investor has helped secure their support for Graphinex, which has been crucial for our project's advancement.

Similarly, EQ Resources has written to me expressing their appreciation for facilitating the connections and subsequent discussions with the US Export-Import Bank. The chairman, Oliver Kleinhempel, advised in his letter—

Your advocacy for Queensland's critical minerals industry while you were in the United States and your department's support to connect Exim with Queensland projects have directly benefited our Mount Carbine tungsten operations.

Mr POWER: I am happy to table that on behalf of the minister.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: No. I am going to ask the minister if he would like to be tabling this document. You were offering it to the committee.

Mr LAST: Yes, I would; thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Would you move, please, that the document be tabled?

Mr BENNETT: Yes. I will move that the document be tabled.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I imagine all are in favour of that tabling? That is carried. Thank you, Minister. It is tabled. Minister, please continue.

Mr LAST: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. It was an intense eight days, but those relationships have certainly paid dividends and continue to pay dividends to the state of Queensland in terms of opening up revenue streams assistance, and those relationships moving forward certainly indicate that there will be further announcements in this space over the coming months.

Mr G KELLY: Minister, with reference to the budget highlights on page 2 of the Service Delivery Statements where it details \$117.8 million over four years to increase funding for natural resource management groups to protect Queensland wildlife and crucial areas of biodiversity, can the minister please update the committee on the delivery of the \$117.8 million in funding to the NRM RQ projects?

Mr LAST: The Crisafulli government announced on 24 January 2025 that \$117.84 million will be dedicated to expanding investment in natural resource management across Queensland over the next four years. This funding delivers on a key commitment from the government's first 100-day plan. The Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing and Regional and Rural Development has worked closely with NRM Regions Queensland to co-design a framework to implement the program and deliver on-ground projects that support landholders and regional Queensland.

The \$117.84 million investment is on-the-ground projects that are focused on improving land and soil condition, protecting and enhancing biodiversity, and supporting healthy coasts and waterways. Some examples of those projects include working with regional landholders to rehydrate soils, repair stream banks and gullies to reduce erosion through revegetation or reduce impacts on threatened species through managing pests. The program went live on 16 June this year, allowing project applications for funding to be submitted. The Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing and Regional and Rural Development expects close to 30 on-ground projects will be delivered through the Natural Resource Management Expansion Program. However, the final number of projects will of course depend on the number of projects submitted to my department and approved for funding. This is a good news story right across Queensland and it has been very well received by the NRM groups and, as you would appreciate, member, will be rolled out in areas like yours where there is certainly plenty of scope for those types of projects.

Mr G KELLY: Can the minister please outline how the Crisafulli government is supporting recreational fossicking and how areas like Mount Morgan will benefit?

Mr LAST: I thank the member for Mirani for that question and I know that what is happening at Mount Morgan is very dear to his heart. The Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing and Regional and Rural Development supports the interests of small-scale miners and the important contribution that they make to Queensland's economy, particularly to Queensland's regions. The government is committed to balancing the longstanding contribution of small-scale mining with the legitimate interests of fossickers and other parties supporting sustainable coexistence now and into the future.

In April of this year I announced the establishment of a new fossicking area at Mount Morgan. The recreational fossicking area was established after the government consented to a general permission area, or a GPA, on state lands surrounding the Mount Morgan No. 7 Dam. The area was opened to fossickers on 22 April, providing a new and exciting tourism drawcard for the Central Queensland area. As the member knows, Mount Morgan was founded as a goldmining town and was once known as one of the richest mines in the world. The new fossicking area welcomes families and adventurers to dig into Mount Morgan's history in a hands-on and an interactive way. I also want to thank the member for his advocacy along with the Rockhampton Regional Council and Advance Rockhampton for championing this exciting project for their community.

Dr ROWAN: Could the minister please outline how the Resources Cabinet Committee is meeting its key deliverable to expedite timeframes and drive economic productivity and growth through effective reform here in Queensland?

Mr LAST: The Resources Cabinet Committee was established early as part of the government's 100-day commitments as a clear demonstration that the state's resources sector is very much open for business. The Resources Cabinet Committee meets bimonthly and brings together ministers from key portfolios that have a direct impact on the resources sector, including Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing and Regional and Rural Development; State Development, Infrastructure and Planning; Environment, Tourism, Science and Innovation; and Treasury. The Resources Cabinet Committee is also supported by the Hon. Ann Leahy MP, Minister for Local Government and Water and Minister for Fire, Disaster Recovery and Volunteers, and the Minister for Primary Industries. In addition, the Resources Cabinet Committee is also supported by an interdepartmental committee which includes directors-general and deputy directors-general from several departments that have key functions or inputs to the resources industry.

The Resources Cabinet Committee's strategic approach enables a whole-of-government coordinated approach that efficiently supports the resource sector across multiple policy areas including mining, environment, land energy, economic strategy, regional and rural development. We are also committed to working in consultation and collaboratively with key industry stakeholders to find improvements to the mining approval system and ensure that projects are not left to languish for years without a decision. In the April meeting, the Resources Cabinet Committee was joined by industry stakeholders for a discussion on proposals to restore confidence in Queensland's resources industry, and certainly the feedback from those industry groups was overwhelmingly positive. They appreciated the opportunity to meet with the committee and to provide the feedback and to discuss the issues which are important in the resources space in Queensland.

In response to our engagement with industry stakeholders, we are taking action by fast-tracking the projects driving increased investment in the resources sector, and it is certainly making a huge difference in that resource space here in Queensland. In May I announced a three-month land release consultation to modernise and streamline how exploration areas are identified and released and that the committee will facilitate the delivery of any outstanding approvals or information required to move Harmony Gold's Eva copper project, which I have talked about here today, towards construction. That is what we do. We make it happen.

Mr G KELLY: Minister, with reference to the budget highlights on page 2 of the Service Delivery Statements where it details \$5.1 million in 2025-26 to accelerate mineral exploration through investment and geoscience activities and data technologies to provide industry-ready data, can you please update the committee on the delivery of the Critical Minerals Strategy?

Mr LAST: The Queensland Critical Minerals Strategy was released in June 2023. It seeks to transform the state economy through the responsible use of Queensland's critical minerals, creating economic development and a sustainable approach for rural and regional communities. Significant progress has been made to advance this long-term agenda, including the establishment of the Critical Minerals office in Townsville. I want to acknowledge here today the work Paul Holden and his team undertake and perform in that office in Townsville. This dedicated unit is enhancing whole-of-government coordination and efficiency through the critical minerals zones program, which drives industry development using a place-based approach.

Critical Minerals Queensland is leading the development of the zones commencing with projects currently being scoped for the Julia Creek-Richmond area. The Collaborative Development Program invests \$3 million to assist companies in the exploration and assessment of mine waste at abandoned and operating mine sites. In addition, a review of the regulatory framework will reduce barriers to facilitate reprocessing opportunities in mine waste. To encourage new investment and exploration activity, my department has reduced rent to zero dollars for five years for all exploration permits for minerals with granted or anniversary dates between 1 September 2023 and 31 August 2028. This \$55 million in forgone revenue marks a deliberate move to streamline approvals and eliminate financial barriers to exploration. This strategy also supports improved service delivery and investor confidence through development of an interactive investor hub showcasing high-quality and up-to-date information about Queensland's critical minerals opportunities.

There is strong interest from the mining and battery technology sectors in progressing \$170 million allocated for the Queensland Critical Minerals and Battery Technology Fund, which opened in June 2023. This contributes to enabling new and expanded mining projects and building the future of Queensland's resources sector. To date, announced grant support from the fund through Queensland Treasury includes \$2 million for the Critical Minerals Group Ltd to develop a demonstration-scale vanadium electrolyte manufacturing facility in South-East Queensland; \$2 million to Graphinex Anodes Pty Ltd to support a demonstration-scale graphite refining and processing facility

in Townsville; \$1.3 million to support Revolver Resources Holdings Ltd with technical studies to accelerate the opening of the Dianne copper mine in Far North Queensland; and \$1.4 million to AnteoTech Ltd for the commercialisation of its high-silicon-content anode for a pouch cell battery.

Through a partnership with the Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy, an environmental, social and governance advisory panel has provided expert advice and support to AusIMM to establish a baseline of knowledge, strengths and capability gaps across Queensland's critical minerals sector. My department has also established a \$4.5 million research alliance with the University of Queensland to undertake research and development in circular economy and mining. This supports innovation, better land use and long-term sustainability aligned with community and industry expectations.

These initiatives provide a targeted approach for future investment in exploration in critical minerals across the state. The strategy lays the foundation for new investment, regional growth and employment opportunities and more efficient delivery of projects to ensure the long-term prosperity of rural and regional Queensland.

Mr BENNETT: With reference to the key deliverables on page 1 of the SDS, which is referencing working closely with the Resources Cabinet Committee, can the minister detail how many coalmining lease renewals he has signed off on since coming to his role?

Mr LAST: Queensland's energy future will include coal as an important part of its energy mix and this includes extending the life of the state's coal-fired power stations. To ensure that Queensland's coal industry remains resilient, the department continues to actively engage with existing holders and new applicants of resource authorities to navigate the approval process and bring projects to market. The department and the Resources Cabinet Committee are exploring options for streamlining this process even further, ensuring that residents, industry and local government have certainty on decisions, regardless of the decision being yes or no.

The Queensland coal sector deserves this support as it is a key contributor to steel and energy production which are both in demand globally. With 70 per cent of steel globally coming from metallurgical coal, my department will continue to facilitate the mining and export of Queensland's world-class coals to more than 30 countries including Japan, India and South Korea.

Since being appointed as the Minister for Natural Resources and Mines I have made sure every effort is being directed to prompt decision-making to provide certainty for the ongoing operations of Queensland's mines. For coal, since becoming minister I have approved one new mining lease application and 11 mining lease renewals. The new mining lease is for a pipeline to support the Coppabella and Moorvale mines to ensure continued water supply during times of drought. I have also approved additional surface area to the Caval Ridge mine, which produces some of the best metallurgical coal in the world. Known as the Horse Pit Extension, this approval will increase the mine's life into the 2050s. There have also been delegated approvals by departmental officers of coal resource authorities, including 16 mineral development licence renewals, one new exploration permit and 82 renewals of exploration permits. There are currently 49 coalmining lease applications being prepared by the department for my consideration in the near future.

Under the Crisafulli government there has been an overall increase in approvals of resource authorities, especially renewals. Since 26 October there have been 109 coal resource authorities renewed. As mentioned, these renewals include 82 exploration permits, 16 mineral development licences and 11 mining leases. By comparison, the previous four-year term of government from the end of October 2020 renewed 363 coal permits over four years, including 258 exploration permits for coal, 80 mineral development licences and 25 mining leases. This means the Crisafulli government has renewed coal permits at a rate of more than 12 per month whereas the previous government renewed coal permits at a rate of fewer than eight per month. More approvals have started to happen under this government because the industry needs certainty and the world needs our coal. My department, along with the Resources Cabinet Committee, are exploring options to streamline processes to make application processes easier and to allow government to reach decisions sooner to provide certainty for all parties.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Logan?

Mr POWER: Last year in estimates it was confirmed that Adani had not had any royalties deferred. Will you be doing a deal with Adani?

Mr LAST: Those discussions are a matter between Adani and the Treasurer.

Mr POWER: Speaking of negotiations, I understand that you have issues with conflicts of interest within your staff. Has there been anyone who has had to be excluded from negotiations with Adani?

Dr ROWAN: Point of order: could the member provide any authentication of the basis of that question?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Moggill. Can you authenticate the basis of that question as requested?

Mr POWER: I think the minister wants to answer, to be honest.

Dr ROWAN: Point of order: I have raised a point of order with respect to standing orders.

Mr POWER: With respect, I was taking some delicacy by not going through this. I wanted to know that there was a conflict plan in place. I took some delicacy about it by not naming people or bringing forward references.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Can you ask the question again without the imputation at the start of it about conflicts of interest, please.

Mr POWER: Are there any conflicts of interest that you have to manage in negotiations with Adani?

Mr LAST: Those staff members in my ministerial office who are required to have conflict-of-interest management plans in place do so and they are strictly adhered to.

Mr POWER: I hope your staff respect the fact that I did not necessarily go into detail to authenticate that.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Do you have a further question?

Mr POWER: I do. Can you advise the committee if the Collaborative Exploration Initiative is funded in the 2025-26 budget?

Mr Fraine: Certainly in terms of the grants that operate across the resources sector, there are a number of grants. There is the Collaborative Exploration Initiative that you talked about. There is the Collaborative Development Program. We have the Critical Minerals and Circular Economy Research Alliance, which the minister spoke to earlier. There are also elements around the Mount Isa acceleration program that the minister spoke to earlier.

With regard to specifically the Collaborative Exploration Initiative that the member was seeking information on, for the benefit of committee members this is a grants program that has been running over a number of rounds now. To get to the end of the member's question, there will be a round 10 and that demonstrates that this is a successful grants program over time. Round 10 of the collaborative exploration program, which will be funded to the tune of \$5 million this financial year, will open in October and it will provide up to \$5 million, as I mentioned, to support successful projects. If I can briefly mention, over recent rounds there have been 18 projects in round 8 and there have been a number of projects—24—from round 9. Those projects are currently due for completion in early 2026.

Mr POWER: It sounds like a fantastic program. The Association of Mining and Exploration Companies—and a tabled document is coming around—was deeply disappointed to see the axing of the Collaborative Exploration Initiative, with \$10 million over four years discontinued. Stakeholder Warren Pearce was concerned that Queensland risked losing investment opportunities especially in the North West Minerals Province. Is it correct that the decision jeopardises the exploration of future mines in the North West Minerals Province, as the key stakeholder in this area has said?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Are you tabling this document?

Mr POWER: I thought I had mentioned that.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you.

Mr Fraine: I might take a moment to have a look at the document.

Mr POWER: It is about the fifth paragraph down, for your benefit.

Mr Fraine: As I have mentioned, round 10 for this year is continuing and will be open in October. Certainly, any future rounds will be subject to future government deliberations.

Mr POWER: Understood. Of the \$17.5 million that was previously made available until June 2027, can you advise where the remaining funding for the Collaborative Exploration Initiative has been reallocated to? I also table this document for a future question so that we are not wasting time.

Mr Fraine: As I have mentioned, round 10 will be open in October. Future allocations will be subject to future budget deliberations.

Mr POWER: But not this budget?

Mr Fraine: Certainly in terms of the funds available for round 10, I have gone through that.

Mr POWER: I turn to a further question on critical minerals. I went to your own website where you made links to critical minerals investment. Director-General, currently on the website is the *Queensland Critical Minerals Strategy*. It is a great document and I thank you for it. It was updated earlier this year. However, if I take you to page 2, you can see the message from the premier about critical minerals is still that of Anna Bligh and there is a forward from Scott Stewart. Why has there been nothing to update the Critical Minerals Strategy and why is it not a priority of this government?

Mr Fraine: Just to be clear, the photo on page 2 does not seem to be Anna Bligh, but I take your point. It appears to be a different former premier.

Mr POWER: Apologies, Palaszczuk; my mistake.

Mr Fraine: Certainly if the intent of your question is whether, as an agency and under this minister's tenure in the portfolio, there is a priority on the Critical Minerals Strategy, the short answer is yes. The longer answer is demonstrated through the progress we are making with the actions in the Critical Minerals Strategy. There are nine actions, as the member would have seen and I thank you for your kind words about the content of the strategy.

As you would have seen, there are nine actions in there. They are really around four key objectives of moving faster and smarter, maximising investment, building value chains, and fostering research and environment. As the minister spoke to earlier, significant progress has been made in this area. He spoke to the Critical Minerals Queensland office in Townsville, which is doing work around whole-of-government coordination and efficiency. I think the minister made reference earlier to a firm called Graphinex. Critical Minerals Queensland is very focused on the work that this agency is looking at across the breadth of what we mean as an agency, which is around not simply getting the critical minerals out of the ground. It might interest members to know that Graphinex is looking at the third-largest graphite deposit in the world, up near Esmeralda.

Mr POWER: I am well aware of Graphinex. My question is: why is there absolutely no update on, as you said, the fantastic work of the Critical Minerals Strategy of the last government?

Mr Fraine: To that point, we provide updates through the work that Critical Minerals Queensland, through the broader department, does on initiatives on a regular basis. On the Graphinex piece that I was just speaking to, the opening of their battery anode demonstration plant within the last month, for instance, is a key piece of work where Critical Minerals Queensland has been working with the proponent and working with other parties such as Vecco, which is a great vanadium company up that way. Updates are provided.

Mr POWER: For the benefit of the committee, I did mislead the committee. Of course, on page 2 there is a message from Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk and Scott Stewart's is on the next page. I want to clarify that I got that wrong.

Mr BENNETT: I wonder why we did not update it with Premier Miles's photo, perhaps.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Thank you for that clarification at the earliest possible opportunity, member for Logan. Director-General, have you finished your answer?

Mr Fraine: Yes, thank you, Deputy Speaker.

Mr MARTIN: Director-General, yesterday we learned that \$2.8 million was spent on the Queensland Law Reform Commission mining lease objections review. I understand draft recommendations from that review were provided and I have tabled those recommendations. Director-General, have you been tasked with progressing any of those recommendations?

Mr Fraine: I will take a moment to review the running list as at 20 February, which is front and back, Deputy Speaker. Thank you for what you have tabled there, member. Of course, as the Attorney-General made clear in her letter to the chair of the QLRC in March, and I think the minister made reference to it in an earlier response to a question, given the establishment of the Resources Cabinet Committee, the Attorney-General took the view that at this time there were other priorities for the QLRC to be involved with. On that basis, in March she asked for the QLRC to cease its work.

To the question around both the running list of draft recommendations from that time and also the final report draft outline, which I will not table, there is work, as the minister has mentioned, being conducted through the Resources Cabinet Committee at this point in time around matters to do with the objections process. That work is ongoing.

Mr MARTIN: So that is \$2.8 million down the drain, then.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr POWER: I have a question, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Go ahead, member for Logan.

Mr POWER: Director-General, we hear a lot about first home ownership and home ownership. E-conveyancing outages with the monopoly provider PEXA have already impacted around 400 settlements across the country. What action is your department taking to bring competition to the electronic conveyancing market in Queensland?

Mr Fraine: Queensland remains committed to competition in the e-conveyancing market. As you may or may not be aware, this reform is being run, for want of a better term, through the Australian Registrars' National Electronic Conveyancing Council, which shortens to ARNECC—a much easier abbreviation to say than our department name. They have been working to enable competition in the e-conveyancing market through interoperability reforms since 2019.

These reforms, for the benefit of the committee, would allow parties to complete land transactions using an electronic lodgement network of their choice rather than both parties needing to use the same platform, as is currently the case. ARNECC, as I mentioned, have been working on this for some time. As I mentioned earlier, Queensland and New South Wales have both undertaken a joint investigation into the reform and where it is at, and ARNECC advised stakeholders in June this year that, while the work progresses, they are now progressing the outcomes of that reform.

Mr POWER: For a later question I am going to call the RSHQ CEO, Mr Djukic. I have one more question on that. If this national reform takes too long, will Queensland go it alone to better support Queensland homebuyers?

Mr Fraine: Our focus at this point in time is on making these reforms work. I am not in a position to speculate on future actions.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: We will move to government questions now. I call the member for Mackay.

Mr DALTON: Minister, can you please provide an update on the status of Keswick Island, which is off the coast of Mackay, and the transfer of the lease to new owners, noting a key deliverable in the SDS relates to driving outcomes that enable tourism?

Mr LAST: The 29 resorts and 25 islands in Queensland come under the auspices of my department. I know this is not Keswick, but you would be aware that Double Island, north of Cairns, is currently being progressed. It has been up for sale and we have received some tenders for that particular island.

In terms of Keswick Island, in April 2024 the lessee applied to my department for consent to transfer its leases to another party. The leases are classed as significant development leases, and an independent financial and managerial capability assessment of the proposed purchaser was required to inform the decision on the transfer. Before the assessment was finalised, the lessee advised my department on 3 June this year that the sale agreement with the purchaser had terminated. As a consequence, my department met with the lessee's legal representatives on 8 July to discuss the lessee's next steps and reiterate the importance of the lessee's progressing development on Keswick Island, even if it is on the market for sale.

My department is also continuing to engage with island sublessee representatives—the most recent engagement being on 30 June this year. I want to be very clear: responsibility for managing the island remains with the current lessee until a decision is made on any transfer of the leases and, if approved, the transfer is registered. As you are aware, island sublessees and residents have continued to raise their ongoing dissatisfaction with the lack of maintenance and development on the leases, particularly the jetty. The lessee is considered noncompliant with its conditions, mainly due to the lack of development of key infrastructure, which includes a marina and, of course, the jetty. The Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing and Regional and Rural Development has been working with the lessee since 2021 to facilitate further development on the lease. The lessee is responsible for ensuring the sublessees are kept informed of any actions on the leases.

Mr BENNETT: Minister, can you share any information on the expressions-of-interest process for Double Island, given page 1 of the SDS refers to driving tourism and ecotourism outcomes, please?

Mr LAST: The Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing and Regional and Rural Development administers 290 tenures under the Land Act over 83 Queensland islands, with approximately 50 leases in the Great Barrier Reef area, for tourism purposes. In addition, Double Island

is held by the state as freehold land. The department administers 29 tourism island resorts on 25 islands, of which 19 are operational and 10 are non-operational, with varying levels of noncompliance.

A critical aspect of Destination 2045—the plan to deliver Queensland's tourism future—is delivering on outcomes for the Great Barrier Reef islands. In February this year I announced that, after years of neglect under the former Labor government, the Crisafulli government is delivering a major step forward for one of Far North Queensland's major tourism assets. The site of the former resort on Double Island was converted from a Land Act reserve to state owned freehold land, paving the way for a bright new future. The change will allow my department to negotiate a fit-for-purpose commercial lease that will help restore Double Island as a premier tourist attraction after the former Labor government sat on their hands and let the island's potential go to waste.

In April this year we opened expressions of interest to experienced tourism operators to transform the island and return it to a vibrant tourism asset. CBRE was appointed as the marketing agent for the island, and I am looking forward to seeing the outcome of this process.

Mr POWER: Mr Deputy Speaker, earlier I indicated I wanted to speak to the RSHQ CEO. With so many points of order, I did not get to speak to him. I was wondering if I could have some time to speak with him.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member, we are in the midst of a government block of questions at the moment. I call the member for Mirani.

Mr G KELLY: Can the minister update the committee on any changes to the current stock route policy and how this will benefit landholders, please?

Mr LAST: There is in excess of 70,000-odd kilometres of stock routes in Queensland—primary, secondary and tertiary. Stock routes are managed accordingly, and there is a huge responsibility on local governments and on the landholders whose properties those stock routes run through or join. After looking at the way those stock routes have been managed in the past, we are certainly doing work in that space at the present time.

I am pleased to confirm that my department's official policy guidance on land dealings over stock routes has been reviewed and an updated operational policy is now available on the department's website. The updated policy addresses concerns regarding unnecessary impacts experienced by holders of leasehold land adjoining the stock route through the process of conversion to freehold. Freehold land, of course, provides a high level of security and flexibility for primary producers in Queensland. The most common type of leasehold land to be converted to freehold is perpetual leases such as grazing homestead perpetual leases over which native title has been extinguished.

Previously, there was a practice which required a portion of leasehold land to be removed to support the widening of minor and unused stock route roads. This practice presented a barrier at the time of conversion when freeholding these leases. The updated policy now removes the requirement for a portion of the leasehold land to be removed when perpetual leases are converted to freehold. As such, the entire perpetual lease can be converted to freehold. In general, stock route roads will now only be widened where stock routes are used or considered to have strategic importance. Minor and unused stock routes will no longer be widened, irrespective of the tenure of the land surrounding the stock route. Let me repeat that: they will no longer be widened, irrespective of the tenure of the land surrounding the stock route.

As the managers of the stock route network, local governments will also benefit. The updated policy will enable local governments to focus on maintaining and improving the parts of the network that are needed and actively used for the primary purpose of the network, which is stock travelling along the routes.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister, I need to interrupt you there because the time for this session has expired.

Mr POWER: Mr Deputy Speaker, point of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Logan, the time for the session has expired.

Mr POWER: Noting that the time is at the discretion of the Deputy Speaker—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, it is, and I am going to use that discretion right now to enable the minister to come back to the—

Mr POWER: But I have some questions for the RSHQ CEO.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Logan, the time for the examination of the estimates for this session has expired. There is one—

Mr POWER: I just think there should be some largesse, given the large numbers of—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member, please cease talking. The time for the examination of the estimates for this session has expired. Minister, there was a question from the member for Traeger that you undertook to come back to the committee on. Director-General, do you have that information to hand?

Mr Fraine: The question was around whether the minister has signed an amended mining plan. The answer to that is no. No later development plan has been approved.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. The committee will take a short break. The committee will resume at 11.15 am.

Proceedings suspended from 11.01 am to 11.15 am.



Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Welcome back, Minister and officials. I welcome participating member, the member for Woodridge. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas of manufacturing and regional and rural development open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Minister, would you like to make a further opening statement in relation to this area of your portfolio?

Mr LAST: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, committee chair and committee members. It is my long-held belief that the manufacturing sector in Queensland is a sleeping giant ready to be awakened. As Minister for Manufacturing and Minister for Rural and Regional Development, I know the department that I oversee shares that zeal to seize the opportunities that lie ahead and turn that vision into action. A strong manufacturing base means more local jobs, more sovereign capabilities and more regional opportunities. Indeed, it is our fifth largest industry, making a major contribution to the state—employing 180,000 Queenslanders, contributing \$27 billion to the economy and generating more than \$24 billion in export earnings. Queensland manufacturers have the ideas, the drive and the talent; they just need the government to back them with the right support so they can get on with the task of creating jobs.

That is exactly what we are doing. We are delivering the \$9.5 billion Queensland Train Manufacturing Program, the manufacturing facility at Torbanlea on the Fraser Coast and the new train maintenance and stabling facility at Ormeau. The QTMP will support more than 1,300 jobs over the life of the project and recruitment for train manufacturing at Torbanlea is well underway.

We are investing \$79.1 million into the new Transforming Queensland Manufacturing Program to support local manufacturers to modernise, innovate and compete in global markets. This program will help manufacturers tap into new export opportunities and drive the next generation of high-tech, high-value jobs.

We have recently delivered on our election commitment to expand Queensland's network of manufacturing hubs, with a \$10 million investment to strengthen their footprint in the regions. I was delighted to stand with the member for Toowoomba North, Trevor Watts, last month to open a new manufacturing hub to service the Darling Downs and Toowoomba region and with the member for Caloundra, Kendall Morton, a few weeks ago to announce a new manufacturing hub to service the Sunshine Coast. Promise made, promise delivered. These hubs are an important resource that support local manufacturers with tailored advice, skills development and commercialisation—support so they can scale up and create more local jobs.

As a born and bred regional Queenslander and a North Queensland-based minister, I have a personal interest in making sure the voices of regional Queenslanders are heard loud and clear. Over the course of this year, I have delivered regional forums in Roma and Emerald, with more to come. These forums give local communities, civic and business leaders a direct line to government so we can hear what matters to them and tailor our solutions to those needs.

Our approach to regional forums is very different to that of the former government which prioritised the delivery of regional forums in South-East Queensland. This government listens to regional communities and delivers. We are backing the industries that power this state. We are delivering opportunities to Queensland's regional heartland. We are ensuring the benefits of our manufacturing sleeping giant are realised and we are ensuring the voices of regional communities are heard and their priorities acted upon. I thank the committee for its work. I look forward to the committee's questions.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. We will now move to non-government questions.

Mr SMITH: Director-General, question on notice No. 4 for the pre-estimates hearing says that the Department of Transport and Main Roads is responsible for delivering the Queensland Train Manufacturing Program. Last week during the transport minister's estimates, the transport minister said, 'I do not have ministerial responsibility in relation to QTMP; that sits with Minister Last.' On 11 June at a committee hearing, your deputy director-general Mr Jason Kidd stated, 'We are not the lead for policy in the Train Manufacturing Program.' Director-General, who is responsible for train manufacturing in Queensland?

Mr Fraine: The accountabilities and set-up around the Queensland Train Manufacturing Program, as they currently exist, to my understanding reflect the way they existed pre 26 October last year—that is, Minister Last has accountability at ministerial level for the manufacturing elements of the QTMP. He is supported in that by the Department of Transport and Main Roads. My department has accountabilities in terms of how we work with local manufacturers to get access to and benefit from the QTMP. That is a continuation of pre-existing arrangements.

Mr SMITH: Mr Fraine, just to confirm, Minister Last is the minister in charge of QTMP?

Mr Fraine: As I stated, Minister Last has accountabilities around the manufacturing elements as they relate to QTMP.

Mr SMITH: Director-General, I understand you joined the minister at a meeting with Downer on Monday; is that correct?

Mr Fraine: That is correct.

Mr SMITH: At that meeting did you discuss delays to the Queensland Train Manufacturing Program?

Mr Fraine: That was part of a regular series of meetings that the minister has had with Downer around progress with the entire program. There are a range of matters discussed at those meetings.

Mr SMITH: The discussion of delays is a regular occurrence at those meetings; is that correct?

Mr BENNETT: Point of order: that is clearly leading.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Bundaberg, just ask your question, please, without putting an imputation or inference in it.

Mr SMITH: Director-General, have you and the minister discussed delays to the Queensland Train Manufacturing Program with Downer?

Mr Fraine: There are a range of issues discussed at those catch-ups at which both I and my colleague from the Department of Transport and Main Roads attend. There are discussions around timetable for the program at those meetings, as you would expect progress on the program.

Mr SMITH: Director-General, is it your understanding that the first trains will no longer be delivered by 2026?

Mr Fraine: That is not a matter of which I have detailed knowledge. As I mentioned earlier, the accountabilities for my role relate to local manufacturers and their opportunities to benefit from the QTMP.

Mr SMITH: Minister, is it your understanding that the first trains will no longer be delivered by the end of next year, given that you are the minister responsible?

Mr LAST: Train 1 manufacture is on schedule for delivery in 2027.

Mr SMITH: In 2027, you can confirm—so a year later than previous financial years. Thank you for the confirmation. Director-General, when will all 65 trains be delivered for service?

Mr Fraine: As I have stated in response to previous questions, the accountability regarding the Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing and Regional and Rural Development is around providing opportunities for local manufacturers to have input into the QTMP supply chain and procurement base. As an example of that, Allweld Manufacturing—

Mr SMITH: We have seen them in the question on notice. I do respect your answer there. Minister, given that you have just said there will be a delay of at least one year based on last year's estimates—

Mr BENNETT: Point of order: you cannot put words in the minister's mouth.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Bundaberg—

Mr SMITH: I am happy to rephrase.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please rephrase. Your preamble there was essentially putting words in someone's mouth. I ask that you refrain from doing that. Just ask the question.

Mr SMITH: Minister, when will all 65 trains be delivered for service?

Mr LAST: I call the Director-General of Transport and Main Roads to respond to that question.

Mr SMITH: You don't want to respond?

Dr ROWAN: Point of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Before you respond, Director-General, member for Bundaberg, the Speaker made it very clear yesterday that if you are not asking a question or making a point of order chatter across the table or up this end of the table should not be happening. Please refrain.

Ms Stannard: All trains in the Queensland Train Manufacturing Program will be delivered in time for the Olympics—so that is 65 six-car train sets.

Mr SMITH: Does the department have a date set for the delivery of all 65 trains?

Ms Stannard: The best practice for projects of this kind is not to lock those dates into days or weeks or months at this stage. It is clearly some years away, but the contractual dates are there. They are commercial-in-confidence dates. We work now with the delivery partner to deliver those trains in time for their needs on the network.

Mr SMITH: My question is for Mr Fraine. Director-General, have you received any advice about workforce shortages for train manufacturing in the Wide Bay region given the volume of construction in South-East Queensland?

Mr Fraine: As I have stated in response to previous questions, matters to do with the manufacturing and construction of the trains themselves with regard to the 65 are not, per se, matters for my department.

Mr SMITH: Will that be best put to the Director-General of Transport and Main Roads?

Mr BENNETT: Point of order on relevance to portfolio responsibility: skills clearly sits with other ministers. I suggest that would better to be directed to ministers who have already given evidence.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The director-general has answered that question. Do you have another question?

Mr SMITH: I do. I have a question for the Director-General of Transport and Main Roads. Director-General, have you received any advice about workforce shortages for train manufacturing in the Wide Bay region given the huge volume of construction in South-East Queensland?

Ms Stannard: Workforce is a key criteria for us as we look to the infrastructure program as a whole right across Queensland—here in South-East Queensland and right across the state. In fact, nationally there is a lot of work going on to ensure we have the right skilled workforce to deliver the capital that is now in the pipeline. It is not unique to Queensland that workers and skilled workers will be critical to the program. We examine that as we develop the pipeline each year, and we sequence our pipeline to ensure we are not overly burdening. Actually, local community members input into that process. In the case of the Wide Bay, the workforce is planned at this stage. Everyone has a plan about how that workforce will ramp up over time, and Downer has recently commenced their expression-of-interest process to secure workforce in time for manufacturing to commence.

Mr SMITH: Will construction of the Torbanlea site be completed by the end of 2025 as originally planned?

Ms Stannard: Clearly, across South-East Queensland and broadly across Queensland this year we have experienced very severe weather events, as you would know, in your region and right across the state, so it is fair to say that construction work has been impacted by rain. I can confirm that Downer has given us advice about how they are managing those impacts in order for them to deliver according to their contract. They ran us through that progress this week, as they have done across multiple meetings.

Mr SMITH: Director-General, just to confirm, will construction of the site be completed by 2025 as advised to you by Downer?

Ms Stannard: Downer was able to advise us on Monday this week about the steps they are taking to ensure their manufacturing commences on time. That involves work they are doing with their construction contractor onsite at Torbanlea to finish the shed to a quality suitable for them to install very

important manufacturing equipment inside that shed. They have negotiated with their construction contractor to ensure they can start fitting the equipment inside the shed. That enables some parallel delivery of work that was previously envisaged to be sequential, and that will enable them to commence manufacturing on time. They will have early access to the shed while some works are still going on around the periphery such as car parking and things that workers will need to get onsite, and that dual running will enable them to meet their contracted schedule.

Mr SMITH: Mr Deputy Speaker, I table a memorandum that Downer distributed to workers on 1 May 2025. I am happy to wait for your discretion as to when to proceed with questions.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: We will get that distributed, please.

Mr SMITH: This question is for Mr Fraine. In relation to Downer's train manufacturing facility in Maryborough, which is the Ellena Street facility, when did you become aware that Downer would notify its workers that there could be as many as 122 redundancies by the end of December 2025?

Mr BENNETT: Mr Deputy Speaker, point of order: clearly the issues with Downer in Maryborough are with the Department of Main Roads, not the minister. Torbanlea is; that has been established.

Mr SMITH: Mr Deputy Speaker, point of order: the director-general said earlier that he does not have oversight of the QTMP site, which is in Torbanlea. I am talking about another manufacturing site in Ellena Street, which is in a suburb of Maryborough. It is a different site and it is therefore not a matter of QTMP.

Mr BENNETT: That question does not relate to QTMP.

Mr SMITH: That is what I just said; thank you for confirming that.

Dr ROWAN: Mr Deputy Speaker, point of order: if it does not relate to QTMP, does it not then relate to matters to do with the Department of Transport and Main Roads?

Mr SMITH: No, it is a manufacturing site in Maryborough. It is not Torbanlea. There are two different sites. One is QTMP; the other is manufacturing services which, as the director-general Mr Fraine has just outlined, is the responsibility of his department. I am just asking the director-general when he became aware that Downer would notify its workers that there could be as many as 122 redundancies. The director-general has just said that they meet regularly with Downer, so I put it to you that my question is in order, Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you for your question, member for Bundaberg. Minister or Director-General, you are well placed to understand if this is within the remit of your portfolio responsibilities. I give the call to the director-general.

Mr Fraine: I have a couple of clarifying points. The first is that absolutely I would have become aware of this around the time of the release. The discussions that happened at the meetings you have referred to earlier are QTMP discussions. In relation to what is happening at the Maryborough facility, I have had discussions with my colleague in transport and main roads around those matters, how they relate to Queensland Rail and some of their contracts, for instance, and that is a matter that transport and main roads is looking at.

Mr SMITH: Director-General, thank you for confirming that. I will confirm for the benefit of the committee that the work Downer undertakes at its existing Ellena Street site, the facility in Maryborough, is separate to the QTMP project Downer will undertake at Torbanlea; is that correct?

Mr Fraine: To the degree that it is impacting my agency, yes, they are separate. In terms of the broader piece of how this relates to QTMP, that is probably a question better put to my colleague in transport.

Mr SMITH: Deputy Speaker, I have a question for the minister. I table two questions without notice and responses dated 1 May 2025. This was during question time in the House. I am happy to wait for your discretion, Mr Deputy Speaker, as to when to continue with my questions.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you. Please distribute it to members and across the table.

Mr SMITH: Minister, one of those questions without notice is in relation to QTMP and 800 jobs and job security. The other relates to Downer's existing facility in Maryborough at Ellena Street and 525 jobs. You responded that these were the same question. Minister, you have just heard that these are in fact two separate programs and two separate sites. Is it the case that on that day when you answered you were not aware of two different manufacturing locations in the Maryborough electorate?

Mr LAST: Mr Deputy Speaker, could I just ask for clarification? Could you point to where I have said they are the same?

Mr SMITH: After the question about QTMP and the 800 jobs you said—

I thank the member for the question. It is the same question.

It is at page 1096, after Mr Mellish asked his question. It is your first sentence.

Mr LAST: I refer you to the next sentence, where I stated—

I will repeat that the jobs that are being created at the new train manufacturing facility at Torbanlea are secure.

Mr SMITH: Yes, absolutely. But you also acknowledge that the first question was about 525 jobs at the Maryborough facility, not Torbanlea, yet you then said that both questions are the same question.

Mr LAST: Through you, Mr Deputy Speaker: I refer you to my answer where I stated—

We have said right from day 1 that those jobs that are attached to this new train manufacturing facility are secure.

There is a differentiation, member, between Torbanlea and Maryborough. The Maryborough Service Delivery Centre is under the auspices of TMR. QTMP falls under my umbrella as a manufacturing centre for the new trains.

Mr SMITH: Minister, thank you for confirming that. Then why is it that you said questions about two different sites and two different workforces were part of the same question? Is it not the case that you did not know and that you were not across your brief?

Dr ROWAN: Mr Deputy Speaker, point of order: there is an imputation and inference in that question and it is a leading question as well, so I would just ask for it to be reframed.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Being a leading question is not covered in the standing orders but it is argumentative. Member, if you have a question to put to the minister, please do so without putting imputations, inferences or arguments about previous statements into the question.

Mr SMITH: I am very, very happy with the minister's answer and I am happy to move on to my next question. Minister, did you make representations to Queensland Rail's shareholding ministers, the Treasurer and the transport minister, about the impact that cancelling rail projects would have, specifically noting that Queensland Rail's CEO confirmed at estimates that 12 EMUs would have been upgraded but have since been cancelled and that two diesel tilt trains were set to be overhauled at the Ellena Street, Maryborough site but were cancelled.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member, there are a few parts to that question. Could you just repeat it?

Mr SMITH: Given that two projects have been cancelled—one being the diesel tilt trains at the Ellena Street, Maryborough site—did you make representations to Queensland Rail's shareholding ministers, being the Treasurer and the transport minister, about the impact that cancelling rail projects would have?

Mr LAST: That is not within my remit, member for Bundaberg. I am responsible for the train manufacturing at Torbanlea. That is my focus; that is what I am responsible for. In terms of the cancellation of other projects, that is a question that was best directed to Minister Mickelberg.

Mr SMITH: Just to confirm, it is the case that you did not make representations to the two shareholding ministers with regard to the diesel tilt train overhaul works.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I believe the minister answered the question.

Mr SMITH: Minister, you answered a question here and also in the House, as we noted before, around the 525 jobs at the Maryborough site. In your second response, you said that all jobs attached to the new Torbanlea site would be safe and secure. Minister, will you guarantee that all 500 workers at Downer's existing Ellena Street facility will be retained at their jobs in Maryborough?

Mr BENNETT: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker: again, we have clearly established that the Downer facility and employees are not under the remit of this minister. It is clearly out of order. You have warned the member twice now. I put it to you that these continuing questions are disruptive.

Mr SMITH: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker: the question without notice that the minister responded to was with regard to 525 jobs in Maryborough. The minister's response was, 'We have said right from day 1 that those jobs that are attached to this new train manufacturing facility are secure.' Therefore, he linked those 525 jobs to the new train manufacturing facility. The question is: will the minister guarantee all 525 jobs at the Maryborough site will remain in Maryborough?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister, you can answer the question. I understand there is some conjecture about whether this is within your portfolio responsibility or not. However, I will allow you to proceed.

Mr LAST: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. The jobs during construction at the QTM facility are of crucial importance. There are 1,300 jobs over the life of that program. According to Downer, as at the end of June this year there were more than 335 FTEs working onsite as part of the construction of the Torbanlea train manufacturing facility, and I would point out that nearly 150 of those were Fraser Coast locals. Workers recruited from outside the Fraser Coast are making use of the Susan River workforce accommodation village. There are 12 apprentices working at Torbanlea on the construction of the train manufacturing facility. There are 18 people working on the manufacturing of bogies at Downer's Maryborough Service Delivery Centre.

I have said previously on a number of occasions that Downer will require a blue-collar workforce at Torbanlea of nearly 200 people as well as 100 white-collar positions. Expressions of interest have started and they will progressively roll out as that program rolls out. That means there are 300 permanent jobs moving forward at the Torbanlea train manufacturing facility. The jobs that are being created at Torbanlea are secure and they are needed. Downer are moving forward with the recruitment process. Fitters, boilermakers and trades assistants are some of the first who will be onboarded at Torbanlea, followed by electrical trades and painters.

Mr SMITH: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker: I welcome the minister's fulsome answer; however, the question was in regard to the 525 jobs at the Maryborough Ellena Street facility. It is vitally important that the train manufacturing minister is supporting those jobs. I wonder if he could get to that point.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: And what is your point of order?

Mr SMITH: Relevance.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Bundaberg, if you could put the point of order without making a further statement, that would be appreciated. Minister, we are going to government questions after this, but do you have further points to add?

Mr LAST: I will make one final comment. The Maryborough Service Delivery Centre is under the remit of the Department of Transport and Main Roads.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I call the member for Burnett for government questions.

Mr BENNETT: Minister, with reference to the budget highlights on page 2 of the SDS where it details '\$79.1 million over 3 years to support the Transforming Queensland Manufacturing program to facilitate pathways to export opportunities and enable reshoring and onshoring by Queensland manufacturers', can you outline how this new approach will be better for all of Queensland?

Mr LAST: The government is delivering on its election commitment to boost the former Made in Queensland program by \$5 million per year from 2025-26. To deliver on this commitment, the Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing and Regional and Rural Development is reviewing how to best meet the challenge of building a more productive, innovative and globally competitive Queensland manufacturing industry. We will capitalise on the benefits already realised and take advantage of the emerging trends in industry. We will be establishing a refreshed grants program—the Transforming Queensland Manufacturing Program—which will be designed to ensure relevance for modern manufacturing. This new program will total \$25 million per year over the next three years, comprised of the original funding for Made in Queensland in addition to the \$5 million per year announced at the election. Committing to funding for the next three years will provide the manufacturing industry in this state with certainty, thereby supporting investor confidence and growth in the industry.

This program will be made available to all manufacturing businesses across Queensland that meet the criteria, whether in Roma, Cooktown or Kingaroy. All applicants will be able to discuss their project with one of the manufacturing hubs and submit an application. This change in approach ensures the new program is inclusive to all manufacturers right across Queensland. Key focuses of the new program include: facilitating pathways to export opportunities and enabling reshoring and onshoring by Queensland manufacturers, enhancing manufacturing sovereignty, encouraging investment and addressing ongoing disruptions to supply chains; advancing technology adoption to increase onshoring and exporting, raw materials processing and value-adding—the program will also seek to help reduce the costs of production and encourage energy efficiency; enabling the adoption of state-of-the-art equipment and technologies, building Queensland's international competitiveness and sovereign manufacturing capabilities—this ensures lasting long-term benefits and ongoing employment;

showcasing the government's commitment to develop and strengthen critical supply chains in key industries such as agriculture, mining and defence—these industries will benefit from onshoring and leveraging our expertise into export capabilities; sustaining the focus on the small to medium sector within the manufacturing industry—these businesses employing up to 200 staff each are the powerhouse of the manufacturing industry and are capable of globally significant innovation; and driving the manufacturing industry to adopt transformation projects to take advantage of key opportunities such as the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, which has many supply opportunities.

The TQM Program will be available to manufacturers with operations already located in Queensland. The objective is to grow and improve industries that are already here and support the growth in local employment. The first \$25 million round of the program will roll out over the course of 2025-26, with small to medium-sized manufacturers able to participate by submitting an application. QTMP will be a competitive process, with the highest rated applications being considered for funding. We will be looking for projects which deliver the greatest impact for Queensland. My department will be sharing news of the rounds over 2025-26, including opening and closing dates for applications.

Mr BENNETT: Minister, with respect to the Queensland Train Manufacturing Program, can you give us the details on the number of jobs that will be delivered as part of the QTMP? How will this benefit the region of Maryborough and Wide Bay?

Mr LAST: Construction of the QTMP facilities and trains and the maintenance of the fleet will support Queensland jobs now and into the future. The QTMP will support more than 1,300 jobs over the life of the program. According to Downer, as at the end of June 2025 there were more than 335 full-time equivalents working onsite as part of the construction of the Torbanlea train manufacturing facility. Nearly 150 of these FTEs were Fraser Coast locals. There were 12 apprentices working at Torbanlea on the construction of the train manufacturing facility and there were 18 people working on the manufacturing of bogies at Downer's Maryborough Service Delivery Centre.

In July of this year, Downer started a public recruitment process to ensure the first intake of workers are ready when train manufacturing commences at Torbanlea in early 2026. Downer will require a blue collar workforce at Torbanlea of nearly 200 people. Recruitment and onboarding will be staged to mirror the manufacturing process and operational requirements, with full mobilisation achieved over a 12-month period. Fitters, boilermakers and trades assistants will be some of the first to be onboarded at Torbanlea, followed by electrical trades and painters.

Close to another 100 white collar positions will be required at the manufacturing facility. These roles will include engineering, safety operations, human resources, management and administrative roles. During manufacturing of the trains at Torbanlea, QTMP will employ at least 22 apprentices and four trainees. Another 80 positions supporting the delivery of the QTMP will be recruited on the Fraser Coast and across Queensland via Downer's major subcontractors. The program also brings with it a pipeline of training and development opportunities.

Downer is a founding member of the Manufacturing Centre of Excellence, partnering with Manufacturing Skills Queensland to deliver training in advanced manufacturing. The Manufacturing Centre of Excellence will provide world-class facilities that could skill workers in advanced machining, CNC robotics and augmented welding along with integrating extended reality. This will provide sustainable, long-term and local training opportunities that will support train manufacturing and industries in the manufacturing supply chain across the Fraser Coast region, developing job opportunities and providing a lasting legacy for the region.

Mr BENNETT: I know the QTMP program has been mentioned here this morning, but I would like to know more details on the delivery program of the 65 trains and the benefits to the Maryborough and Wide Bay community, please.

Mr LAST: The Queensland Train Manufacturing Program—QTMP—was established to meet the increasing demand of rail transport in South East Queensland over the next 10 years. The program will build 65 new six-car passenger trains at a purpose-built manufacturing facility at Torbanlea in the Fraser Coast region. Some \$950 million has been allocated to the QTMP in 2025-26. Construction at Torbanlea is progressing with the main facility's building's steel frame and roof installation now completed and internal fit-out ongoing. Manufacturing for QTMP components is already underway, including manufacturing bogies at Downer's Maryborough Service Delivery Centre. Construction of the new rail facility at Ormeau for train maintenance and stabling is continuing, with significant earthworks and construction of the maintenance building underway.

The Queensland government is also delivering a number of related projects, including additional stabling yards, a test track and rail network connections for both facilities, in partnership with Queensland Rail.

The total value of the QTMP is \$9.5 billion. In June 2023, Downer was awarded a \$4.6 billion design, build, maintain contract for the delivery of QTMP. Construction of the facilities, manufacturing of trains and maintenance of the fleet means jobs for Queenslanders now and into the future. The first QTMP train is anticipated to enter service in 2027.

The QTMP trains will be the most accessible trains in Australia with an accessible access path through the train and electronic levelling control and train boarding bridges to facilitate independent boarding at all doors for people who use mobility devices. There will also be 20 accessible spaces, 88 priority seats, two fully accessible toilets, hearing loops, USB charging on all seats, and four bicycle storage spaces on every train. All 65 trains are expected to be in service by 2032 in time for the Brisbane Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Mr DALTON: Minister, noting that \$79.1 million over three years has been provided to support the Transforming Queensland Manufacturing Program, can the minister please outline the government's strategy to support manufacturers and encourage the industry to grow?

Mr LAST: The Queensland government is committed to building a productive, innovative and globally competitive manufacturing industry. Queensland's manufacturing supply chains underpin every industry of the economy from critical minerals and resources to defence, energy, food, medical and the transport sectors. There are significant opportunities to grow and diversify the manufacturing industry through building industry capability and connecting them with supply chain opportunities not only across Queensland but also across the globe. We are seeing this with manufacturers building trains, supplying critical components to defence and providing medical supplies to our hospitals.

Our vibrant, productive and competitive manufacturing industry makes major contributions to the state economy by employing around 180,000 Queenslanders, contributing around \$27 billion to the economy and generating more than \$24 billion in export earnings.

The government is delivering on our election commitments to expand our regional manufacturing hub network with an additional \$10 million investment to establish a hub in areas like Toowoomba and the Sunshine Coast. We are investing in a new manufacturing grants program, inclusive of the \$5 million per year announced at the election. This will see a \$25 million per year grants program over the next three years.

The manufacturing hubs support regional manufacturers to adopt leading-edge manufacturing systems and processes, such as lean manufacturing, to increase efficiency and productivity. The manufacturing grants are assisting manufacturers to adopt new technologies to increase their productivity and international competitiveness. The government has a range of other initiatives to strengthen the industry and support Queensland manufacturers to transition to advanced manufacturing through, for example, the Women in Manufacturing program which is encouraging women to retain and increase employment in the industry, providing support to the Advanced Robotics for Manufacturing Hub—ARM Hub—to assist manufacturers to adopt world-leading technology in robotics and design led manufacturing across Queensland.

Mr DALTON: Minister, with reference to the key deliverables listed on page 1 of the Service Delivery Statements where it says, 'The government will drive advanced manufacturing and jobs growth across Queensland through identifying long-term manufacturing opportunities that contribute to economic prosperity across the state,' can the minister please outline the ways in which he is delivering on this commitment?

Mr LAST: The Queensland government is developing a new strategy for the manufacturing industry to build a productive, innovative and globally competitive manufacturing industry. The strategies are currently being developed with the newly established Queensland Manufacturing Advisory Council, industry and stakeholders.

On 15 July 2025, the first meeting of the newly formed council was held and has already begun to shape the new ideas to inform the strategy and to transform Queensland's industry. I heard from the council members about the challenges that Queensland's manufacturing industry is facing in the light of global uncertainty, but also the great strengths that we have here in Queensland and the strong commitment to building manufacturing right here in Queensland.

As the industry contends with ongoing global trade disruptions and supply chain issues, council members agree that the adoption of technology is critical to improve efficiency and drive productivity

outcomes. I also heard that labour supply and skills gaps remain a pressure point in Queensland's industry, and we need to work with key government and industry stakeholders to address this challenge together.

I look forward to working with stakeholders on transforming Queensland's manufacturing industry and to inform Queensland's strategy. With the support of further investments in onshore processing and manufacturing, we can create stronger supply chains across Queensland, support key opportunities and boost the state's economy. Having the ability to produce essential goods domestically and to add value throughout the supply chains, whether in critical minerals, resources, defence and aerospace, primary industries, medical, transport or energy, we will provide a strategic advantage and reduce vulnerability to external shocks. The government will assist more manufacturers to move up the value chain and position Queensland as a place where manufacturing businesses choose to invest and grow.

Mr DALTON: With reference to the budget highlights on page 2 of the Service Delivery Statements where it details \$79.1 million over three years to support development of the new Transforming Queensland Manufacturing Program, can the minister please explain how the grants in this program will be allocated?

Mr LAST: I thank the member for Mackay for the question. The Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing and Regional and Rural Development is reshaping the manufacturing grants program to take advantage of emerging needs in the industry. While the new program will also consolidate some existing grants programs, \$25 million per year compares with an average of \$21 million per year over the past six years for manufacturing grants programs run by my department.

The new Transforming Queensland Manufacturing Program will launch in 2025-26 supported by this important election commitment and providing funding certainty within a single ongoing program. The Transforming Queensland Manufacturing grants program will have a budget of \$75 million to pursue emerging industrywide place-based opportunities across the state. The program will replace the existing Made in Queensland grants program, and the total budget includes the prior Made in Queensland budget allocation plus the extra \$5 million per year announced at the election. The focus will be on building export capability and onshoring manufacturing to Queensland. Importantly, the program will also be made available across the state.

This funding will be available for new projects in 2025-26, but the support for manufacturers does not end there. The program will continue over the next two financial years, making \$25 million available per year over three years. As such, the new program will give the industry the certainty it needs across the forward estimates. My department has in the past also administered one-off grants programs for the manufacturing industry which were funded by other government departments. These programs have now closed, as funding from other departments ended in 2024-25. Existing projects under previous programs will continue to deliver outcomes including international competitiveness, productivity and innovation via the adoption of new technologies and the creation of new high-skill jobs. Projects are chosen for their long-term ongoing benefits. These will continue in 2025-26 and beyond and will include the relevant milestone grant payments.

Additionally, I note that the government made an election commitment to provide \$10 million to increase the footprint of the manufacturing hubs in this state. These manufacturing hubs offer boots-on-the-ground support for the manufacturing base and deliver place-based services and solutions directly to the sector. Our new Toowoomba and Sunshine Coast manufacturing hubs are currently being established. With eight locations across the state, these hubs provide services to all manufacturers to grow the capability and capacity of manufacturing across Queensland. I can add that they have been very well received, are well patronised and are doing some great work in those locations where they have been established.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: We will now move to non-government questions again.

Mr DICK: Director-General, I refer you to page 7 of the SDS and the \$18.8 million capital allocation to complete round 6 of the Building our Regions program. Can you advise if you have been directed or requested by the minister or the government to deliver a seventh round of the Building our Regions program, please?

Mr Fraine: I thank the member for Woodridge for the question. Of course, as you referenced, Building our Regions has had six rounds to date. That program was fundamentally based and developed out of the department of state development. My department—when it was formerly the department of regional development, manufacturing and water, with the manufacturing component—delivered on round 6 because of its primary focus on water related matters. As the minister said with

regard to a few other grants programs, the spend of round 6 continues to roll out. Round 6 itself has closed. At that point, our role in the Building our Regions piece with regard to that round finishes.

The minister has referred to a range of other grant programs we have. There are also other measures that are being delivered, of course, through government. This includes the Works for Queensland program, which now has permanent and guaranteed funding of a minimum of \$100 million, and strengthening the Queensland Betterment Fund through a permanent boost of \$40 million.

Mr DICK: Minister, you have heard the evidence of the director-general. Your department will not be continuing with a seventh round of Building our Regions; is that correct?

Mr LAST: Yes, it is.

Mr DICK: Minister, you are not aware of any other department that will be continuing the Building our Regions program?

Mr LAST: I cannot speak for other departments.

Mr DICK: So you are not aware. Director-General, the director-general of the department of state department confirmed in the hearing on 30 July that the Queensland Battery Industry Strategy, which would have supported a new \$1 billion industry for our state and the creation of more than 9,000 jobs, many of them advanced manufacturing jobs, has been cut. Were you or your departmental officers consulted before the decision to cut the Queensland Battery Industry Strategy was made?

Mr Fraine: Battery manufacturing—I referred to this in the previous session, which you were not here for—and the future of that industry in this state I think has a positive future to look forward to, for instance, with the work we have done with Graphinex—their work is now proceeding to the battery anode demonstration plant—and through to the work that is happening at the University of Queensland through their partnership with Graphinex. That is continuing to drive the battery industry forward. We will continue to drive manufacturing outcomes in this state across a range of sectors and industries. It may interest the committee to know that manufacturing is a \$27 billion industry in this state—the fifth largest industry we have.

Mr DICK: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker: relevance. The question was whether he was consulted and I think the director-general has provided a fulsome answer to the committee. Might I ask my next question, please, Mr Deputy Speaker?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Did you have anything else to add, Director-General?

Mr Fraine: No, thank you.

Mr DICK: Minister, in your roles as minister for manufacturing and minister for regional development, were you consulted by the Deputy Premier or his department—including his director-general—before the decision to cut the Queensland Battery Industry Strategy was made?

Mr BENNETT: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker: there is inference in the word 'cut'. I think the question could be rephrased to be more appropriate.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you for your point of order, member for Burnett. Member for Woodridge, I have not had the opportunity to review in detail the transcript from the State Development and Regional Industries Committee. I do not know if your words are inferences, argumentative or otherwise, but if you could ask the question again according to standing orders that would be appreciated.

Mr DICK: Mr Deputy Speaker, what I will do is table an excerpt from the transcript where I directly asked the director-general of State Development a question on that issue and also an answer to a question on notice answered by the Deputy Premier.

Mr MARTIN: I will table that.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is tabled by the member for Stretton. Could we have it distributed, please?

Mr DICK: For the sake of the hearing, Minister, were you consulted by the Deputy Premier, his department or his director-general before the decision to terminate the Queensland Battery Industry Strategy, and the \$500 million allocated to it, was made by the government?

Mr LAST: It was subject to future government investment decisions, federal government funding, which did not eventuate, and of course a business case that was not yet completed.

Mr DICK: That was in relation to the industrialisation centre, which is different to the strategy. I will ask the minister this: did the Deputy Premier ask you for your views and the department's views or

advice on the impact on regional economies and regional employment if the strategy was not to proceed?

Mr LAST: I am not aware of any of those discussions.

Mr DICK: Thanks for your answer, Minister. My next question is to the director-general. In a media release issued on 30 July, the day of the Deputy Premier's estimates hearings last week, the Deputy Premier said that the government had terminated support for what he said were non-viable industries. Director-General, in your answer earlier you talked about the viability of the battery industry and how important it was to Queensland. Director-General, my question is this: were you or were officers of your department ever asked to express a view or provide advice to the director-general of the department of state development or departmental officers that a Queensland battery industry was a non-viable industry?

Mr Fraine: There have been no discussions of the nature of the battery industry being a non-viable industry.

Mr DICK: Thank you, Director-General. I appreciate that. My question is to the minister. Has your department ever provided you with any advice at any time that a battery industry in Queensland and a Queensland battery industry strategy was non-viable?

Mr LAST: As we move forward in this space there are some green shoots. If you have a look at a business called Graphinex in Townsville and their technology and the way they are embracing technology as well as Vecco in the vanadium space with the production of electrolytes in terms of battery technology and how that is advancing and the pace at which it is advancing, that provides plenty of opportunities in this state. It is certainly something that we have been promoting, supporting and encouraging. As those critical minerals come online we will continue to invest and help grow that sector.

Mr DICK: Minister, you are aware, aren't you, that there was a \$500 million allocation to support that program? That is correct? You know that?

Mr LAST: Yes, I do.

Mr DICK: Thank you. I appreciate your answer. Minister, did you express a view at any stage to the Deputy Premier that that industry—maybe I will put it another way. I am sorry, Minister. Minister, do you agree with the Deputy Premier that an industry that would have generated \$1.3 billion in additional economic activity in Queensland and created more than 9,000 jobs, including advanced manufacturing jobs in North Queensland, is non-viable?

Mr BENNETT: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker: I stress it is asking for an opinion.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Burnett. That is a valid point of order. It is seeking an opinion. I would ask the member to please rephrase.

Mr DICK: Perhaps I will ask a further question to the minister, please. As part of the Queensland Battery Industry Strategy the director-general and officers of the department of state development have admitted as part of the budget estimates process that your government will spend \$4.25 million on a new centre for battery industrialisation in Queensland, the Australian Battery Industrialised Centre at Swanbank that will now never be built. As Minister for Manufacturing to support advanced manufacturing jobs and industrial development in Queensland, did you ever advocate to the Deputy Premier that this cut should be halted and this centre be built?

Mr BENNETT: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker: I go back to the relevance and also the word 'cut', Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Burnett. I take your point of order. Member for Woodridge, is that matter relevant to the matter you spoke about, the funding? Is that relevant to the minister's portfolio?

Mr DICK: The Minister for Manufacturing and the Minister for Regional Development?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is the specific budgetary measure that you are referring to within the minister's department?

Mr DICK: The minister is responsible for industrial development in this state including advanced manufacturing for batteries, which he has referred to. In the first part of the hearing this morning he made direct comment and he has answered questions to that extent as well today.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member, that is not what I asked. I asked if that specific line of funding was in the minister's portfolio.

Mr SMITH: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker: SDS page 1 says that a key deliverable is to drive supply chain development to grow our economy and support Queensland communities. This is directly relating to the growth of the economy to support Queensland communities.

Mr DICK: If I can also add, page 5 of the SDS talks about 'drive regional economic growth' and 'deliver programs and projects that contribute to job creation and stimulate regional economic development and investment', and a battery industry is central to that.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Sure, I understand. I will allow the question. I just thought the specific program you were referring to was from another department. Minister, you may respond.

Dr ROWAN: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker: it is my understanding that the strategy and the funding was under state development, under that portfolio area. Whilst I accept some of the other information raised, specifically the strategy and the funding were under state development.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The minister is able to inform the committee if the question relates to another portfolio area and answer the other part of the question relevantly as he sees fit.

Mr LAST: I thank the member for the question, a question better directed to the Deputy Premier as funding falls under his umbrella in relation to that particular program. I reiterate that we are absolutely committed to building a productive, innovative and globally competitive manufacturing industry in this state. Our actions to date, our support of some of those critical mineral companies—whilst we were on our overseas trade mission there was a lot of interest in this space from overseas investment firms. In fact, the US government talked at length about this particular issue as well. We want to be in a position to capitalise on that. We will continue to drive investment in that space, hence our support for businesses such as Graphinex, Vecco and EZ resources. They are businesses and companies which are doing some fantastic work in this space and we will continue to support them.

Mr DICK: I do want to ask you about that announcement at Graphinex. Minister, I put to you that on 11 July you attended Graphinex's opening of their Townsville battery and anode hub. I table a media release of the Senator the Hon. Anthony Chisholm, federal Assistant Minister for Resources, and you on that day. Those releases—

Mr MARTIN: I will table those.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: They are so tabled and will be distributed.

Mr DICK: I will let you have a look at those but I will make an introductory comment first. Those releases talk about delivering value-added manufacturing and building sovereign capability across battery material supply chains. Minister, did you explain to the company on that date that the Queensland Battery Industry Strategy and \$500 million in associated funding had been terminated by your government? The question is just whether you talked to them about it.

Mr LAST: One moment, member, while I peruse these quotes.

Mr DICK: If you have a look on page 3 of Senator Chisholm's media release, half way down there are quotes from the Graphinex chairman. The release talks about battery material supply chain. Two paragraphs later it talks about delivering value-added manufacturing, but I think you understand that. Did you tell the company on that date that you had terminated the strategy and the \$500 million in support?

Mr LAST: I also point to the comments from the Graphinex Managing Director, Art Malone, that—

This milestone has been made possible with support from the Australian Federal and Queensland State Governments ...

We thank both tiers of government for their ... leadership and investment in critical minerals, which have helped to create local jobs, strengthened international partnerships, and advanced Australia's position as a global leader in sustainable battery materials.

I come back to my earlier comments that we are working hand in glove with companies such as Graphinex to advance their projects and to ensure that they are given the support to grow and provide those jobs which we so desperately need but also something we are very passionate about in terms of value-add. That is something that I know the director-general and I share a passion for in terms of the critical minerals and how we might value-add in that space to create not only added value but also jobs.

Mr Fraine: To add to that, as we referred to in the previous session, coming out of the discussions that were had with potential investors on the minister's North American trip earlier in the year through to PDAC, Graphinex is one key example of a company that is in far-reaching negotiations with potential investors around not only what they do with the Esmeralda deposit but also opportunities

for their battery anode demonstration plant or, indeed, the further expansion of that and through the connections to Vecco and the work in vanadium as well.

Mr DICK: Thank you. In reference to the overseas trip the minister took, you accompanied him, Director-General?

Mr Fraine: Yes, I did.

Mr DICK: So the overseas trips that both of you took to the United States to seek investment in Queensland. For the purposes of openness and providing investors with policy clarity and certainty, Minister, will you now contact those investors you met in the United States to encourage them to invest in Queensland to advise them that your government has terminated the Queensland Battery Industry Strategy and \$500 million in support?

Dr ROWAN: Mr Deputy Speaker, a point of order: the strategy and the funding for this relates to the portfolio of state development. I believe the minister is being responsive to the questions as asked. Given that, I again seek your guidance in relation to that with respect to the question as asked by the member for Woodridge.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Woodridge, that program does relate to another minister's portfolio responsibilities. Could you ask a question, please, in relation to this minister's portfolio responsibilities?

Mr DICK: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker; I will. I refer to the regional forum convened by the minister in Roma in June, and my question is to the director-general. The minister's media release on that date says the forum coincides with the review of Queensland's statutory regional plans. Director-General, were officers from the Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning in attendance at that forum to progress consultation on the regional plan for that region?

Mr Fraine: I will certainly come back to you before the end of the session in terms of those attendees at that forum, but I would point to the statement that I think you are making in the media release. That forum that the minister hosted on the day was around a range of matters that were of importance and value to that local community as raised by that local community. It is not the only engagement mechanism that different forms of government have with communities such as the Emerald community.

Mr DICK: Thanks, Director-General. Perhaps you could come back and advise the committee: was any part of that forum dedicated to formal consultation on the next regional plan? I am just trying to correlate what happened at the forum with what is in the media release.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Do the regional plans relate to this portfolio or the state development and planning portfolio?

Mr DICK: No, it is directly relevant to the work conducted by this minister as the minister for regional development. It is a forum convened by him and falls within his portfolio responsibilities and is funded by his department, the examination of which is before the committee.

Mr LAST: We are happy to come back.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: They are happy to come back.

Mr DICK: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. Minister, for the purposes of openness, transparency and accountability, will you publish the terms of reference, as the previous Labor government did, for the regional forums you are conducting across Queensland and make them publicly available on your department's website?

Mr LAST: I reiterate that this government is committed to ensuring regional voices are embedded in our decision-making and policy and program design. I have hosted two regional forums, which you have alluded to, member—one in Roma and another in Emerald. In Roma I had the pleasure of hearing from over 70 regional representatives from local government, industry, community and business leaders from the Maranoa region, with a similar representation at Emerald with over 60 representatives attending. All those attendees provided a broad depth of regional knowledge and experience. Good discussions were held on the current issues and the opportunities impacting their regions.

I know that local communities are passionate about their futures and I wanted to hear directly from them about how our government can work together to support regional growth and prosperity. As a regional member of parliament, I am acutely aware of the issues faced by a lot of our rural and regional communities, and those forums spoke about many of those issues and also, importantly, included a panel involving a range of community leaders to discuss relevant issues, local issues, to share new information and to provide updates on the initiatives that were underway.

They also provided an opportunity for me as the Minister for Natural Resources and Mines, Minister for Manufacturing and Minister for Regional and Rural Development to hear firsthand from attendees about the issues and the opportunities in those particular communities. Notable issues that were raised included the cutting of red tape, attraction and retention of workforces to support industry and community employers, as well as education, child care, health and housing. We are recording all of those issues and identifying key actions that government can undertake to support resolution of those particular issues.

If you have a look at Roma, for example, we are engaging with the Department of Education on the consolidation of existing infrastructure to potentially free up land in Roma to ease housing pressures and providing information to a community radio station in relation to available land for communication towers to strengthen and extend their broadcast zone. As you would appreciate, that is absolutely crucial in times of disaster. We are also exploring options for improved childcare services. There is commonality there right across rural and regional Queensland. In Emerald we are considering establishing a working group with the resources industry to map and identify proposed social outcomes for Emerald and the Central Highlands region. In terms of investing, we are investigating government contributions to the Central Queensland—

Mr DICK: Mr Deputy Speaker, I raise a point of order on relevance. My question was a simple one—whether the minister would publish the terms of reference. I appreciate his answer. Perhaps I could move on to my next question?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister, do you wish to address anything more in that question? You have been relevant so far, but the member would like to move on otherwise.

Mr LAST: In response to the member's question, they are not formalised terms of reference with regard to the forums that I conduct in these regional centres. I go there with an open mind and with an agenda to engage, to take on board their issues and their concerns and to feed that back to the cabinet table. It has been documented that we are doing a community cabinet in Emerald in the next week or so, so we are certainly out and about and taking on board the issues in rural and regional Queensland.

Mr DICK: Associated with that, again, Minister, for the purposes of openness, transparency and accountability, will you publish and make available on your website a list of participants, the forum agendas and the outcomes of those meetings both in Roma and in Emerald?

Mr LAST: I am happy to explore that option, member. It is important and there is nothing to hide from in terms of the issues they are raising in those particular localities. If members who are giving information or evidence wish to remain anonymous or are giving confidential information then that will obviously need to be taken into account, but at the end of the day this is about transparency. This is about getting those issues raised in rural and regional towns and communities on the agenda so that we can address them openly.

Mr DICK: Thanks. I appreciate the concession. Thank you, Minister. I have another question.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I think we might take some government questions now.

Mr BENNETT: Minister, I want to come back to the Training Manufacturing Program, if I may, and seek some clarity with regard to some issues around the QTMP timelines that were mentioned earlier today, particularly for trains coming into service. I just wanted to seek some clarity around that if I may please, Minister.

Mr LAST: I want to be very clear here today. What we are seeing is the usual Labor scare campaign being attempted here. We are rolling out the trains, as I have said, while they are trying to roll out a scare campaign here today. As is the case in a lot of projects around this state, we are cleaning up the mess left by the former Labor government. There is no 12-month delay to the trains going into passenger service, as the director-general outlined in his response. The member for Bundaberg's claims that there is a 12-month delay in trains is misinformation—

Mr SMITH: Point of order: my comments responded to the minister's answer. I take offence and ask that he withdraw.

Mr BENNETT: Point of order: I struggle to see a personal offence.

Mr SMITH: I have taken personal offence and I ask that he withdraw.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister, you did refer to the member personally and he has taken personal offence. Would you withdraw, please?

Mr LAST: I withdraw. I refute categorically the claims made by the member for Bundaberg in his statements here today. The timeline for the trains going into passenger service is as we inherited it and that has not changed.

Mr DALTON: Can the minister explain the activities associated with the Women in Manufacturing sponsorship of the North Queensland Cowboys and how it is benefiting Queensland manufacturers, particularly those in North Queensland?

Mr LAST: I thank the member for his question. He is a passionate North Queenslander. The Queensland government has a sponsorship agreement with the North Queensland Cowboys National Rugby League club based in Townsville for the 2025 season. The sponsorship leverages the significant contribution Townsville makes to the state's manufacturing output, being the third-top manufacturing region in Queensland and contributing \$1.2 billion to gross value add. The sponsorship is an initiative under the Women in Manufacturing program to increase awareness of regional manufacturing careers and to encourage more women to enter the industry. The sponsorship leverages off the successful and growing fan base of the NRL Women's series to support the program. It has been very well received. The growing Cowboys fan base includes 471,000 supporters across Australia. The community owned club surpassed its highest ever full season membership this year with 11,242 full season members signed up at the start of the 2025 season.

The sponsorship includes promotion of the Townsville and Cairns manufacturing hubs; manufacturing events; business development opportunities with facilitated introductions of manufacturing businesses to Cowboys-targeted commercial partners to form potential partnerships; being recognised as a supporting partner of the NRL Cowboys House which houses student boarders, including approximately 100 school-age First Nations young women, allowing the department to promote manufacturing to young women and other students to explore opportunities in the manufacturing industry; appearances by the Cowboys National Rugby League and National Rugby League Women club players and ambassadors at Women in Manufacturing events; televised coverage of the Queensland government's Women in Manufacturing program through match-day events to promote Women in Manufacturing; recognition as a match-day partner on radio and television; and distribution of promotional items to encourage Women in Manufacturing at entry gates on match day. It is comprehensive and the Queensland government will continue to encourage and support more women to forge exciting careers in Queensland manufacturing. Encouraging more women to continue or commence careers in manufacturing will assist in addressing skills shortages in the industry. We know that a diverse and inclusive workforce contributes to industry growth which in turn contributes to the economic prosperity of Queensland.

The department will consider future sponsorships in other regions pending the final evaluation of the Cowboys sponsorship and available budget, but certainly it has been very well received in North Queensland and we are confident that that will translate to more women taking up a career in manufacturing.

Mr DALTON: Minister, with reference to your key deliverables listed on page 1 of the Service Delivery Statements where it says the government will support manufacturers to adopt advanced manufacturing technologies, can the minister please provide an update on the delivery of the dedicated TAFE centre of excellence for advanced manufacturing in Moreton Bay?

Mr SMITH: Point of order, Deputy Speaker: as I am sure you can appreciate, it is just a little bit hard to hear the questions with the anger of the teachers outside. Could that question be rephrased? They are very loud and they are very angry; it is hard to hear from this end.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Bundaberg, you are warned. That is a completely inappropriate way of making a point of order. You know better. You have been here long enough.

Mr MARTIN: We can all hear the teachers.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Stretton! Minister, do you need the member to repeat the question?

Mr LAST: No, I understood that question perfectly, thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, and I thank the member for the question. Funding of \$60 million has been allocated for a new TAFE centre of excellence focused on advanced manufacturing. The centre of excellence will service the skills needs of the population and employment growth centres of Moreton Bay, Brisbane North and the Sunshine Coast. The commitment is part of this government's \$199.1 million plan for three new TAFE centre of excellence sites across the state to help secure a pipeline of skilled workers for Queensland's future.

The centre will be constructed on land provided by Moreton Bay Regional Council at its Petrie Mill master planned site. Approximately 4,600 square metres is available for the establishment of this new vertical TAFE campus. The construction of the TAFE centre of excellence will take three years. Initial scoping and planning by the Department of Trade, Employment and Training is underway for the project. As a centre of excellence it will work with and complement other facilities across the state. The Moreton Bay centre will also include a training precinct for TAFE teachers as part of the delivery of the government's election commitment.

The training precinct will include TAFE teacher training and satellite precincts to be established in Central and North Queensland. Along with our investments in TAFE facilities in Townsville, Cairns and Eagle Farm, the new centre of excellence will form part of a network to ensure industry and students can access skilling opportunities across the state. My department is actively working with the Department of Trade, Employment and Training in the design and delivery of the centre, particularly to assist in identifying skills needs for the range of courses to be developed and delivered.

My department has had a presence in the Moreton region supporting the large manufacturing base for the last two years, with a staff member based at the TAFE campus at the Petrie Mill site. Staff have also worked closely with the Moreton Bay Regional Council, TAFE, industry and key stakeholders to deliver support to the region's manufacturers. The development of the new TAFE centre of excellence will support the region's industry to grow and prosper through the development of a skilled workforce.

Mr G KELLY: With reference to the key deliverables listed on page 1 of the Service Delivery Statements, where it states that the department will support regional and rural Queensland communities by providing pathways and enabling their voice to be heard through better consultation and agreement, can the minister please update the committee on the status and progress of the rural and regional development forums?

Mr LAST: This government, as I have previously stated here today, is committed to ensuring regional voices are embedded in our decision making and policy and program design. To support hearing our regional voices—and I am losing mine fast—I am hosting a series of regional forums. In June I hosted two regional forums, one in Roma and one in Emerald. In Roma I had the pleasure of hearing from over 70 regional representatives from local government, industry, community and business leaders from the Maranoa region. We had a similar representation at Emerald with over 60 representatives attending.

The attendees all provided a broad depth of regional knowledge and experience and good discussions were had on the current issues and opportunity impacting on their regions. I know local communities are passionate about their futures and I wanted to hear directly from them about how our government can work with them to support regional growth and prosperity. The forums included a panel involving a range of community leaders to discuss local issues, share new information and to provide updates on initiatives underway. They also provided an opportunity for me, my department and other stakeholders to hear firsthand from attendees about issues and the opportunities in those communities. Notable issues included cutting of red tape, attraction and retention of workforces to support both industry and community employers, as well as education, child care, health and housing. We have taken on board those issues. We have identified the key actions that government can undertake to support resolution and we are certainly committed to working with those rural communities right across this state.

I look forward to the future forums that I will be conducting across Queensland. They are important. They have been very well received. They appreciate the fact that they have a minister coming to their community to listen and take on board their feedback and to act on their issues; to give them that confidence that they do have a voice and that they do matter. I am pretty passionate about rural and regional Queensland and I could not be prouder to be flying the flag for this government in those areas at these forums.

Mr G KELLY: I refer to the key deliverables listed on page 1 of the Service Delivery Statements where it states that the department will 'support regional and rural Queensland communities by providing pathways and enabling their voice to be heard through better consultation and engagement'. Minister, can you please update the committee on the status of the Regional Collaborative Governance Model?

Mr LAST: The Department of Natural Resource and Mines, Manufacturing and Regional and Rural Development is working in partnership with the Public Sector Commission to facilitate the implementation and operation of the Regional Collaborative Governance Model. To support addressing complex regional challenges, the model seeks to bring together a multi-agency response through a

formal governance structure, improved communication channels and a more innovative way of working together. It focuses on three goals: understanding regional challenges, promoting interagency collaboration and cultivating regional leadership.

Over the last 12 months, the department has supported the state's six regional leadership networks comprising representatives of all agencies in the regions to: identify and document regional priorities to guide collaborative planning and action across agencies aligned to strategic government directions; establish cross-agency priority projects, reinforcing the regional leadership networks' role in advancing coordinated responses to regional challenges; increase participation in the networks in terms of both officer engagement and the number of agencies involved; increase awareness of the networks as a conduit for addressing place-based issues, for example, through enhanced engagement with local decision-making bodies; and enable a deeper understanding of regional commonalities while still recognising that solutions are tailored to each place.

The regional leadership networks meet bimonthly to progress regional priorities identified in their work plans and to discuss emerging challenges and opportunities. There are currently 205 members across our six regional leadership networks, with 19 priority working groups established to support the delivery of those work plans. The priorities of the networks align with broader, whole-of-government priorities including addressing youth crime, housing pressures and the impacts of energy generation.

A key achievement is the establishment of an initiative to improve visibility of the major project pipeline in Queensland's regions and an understanding of its cumulative impacts. The mapping of state agency interests and roles in Weipa, for example, has also been completed. This work will help inform a clear, integrated, whole-of-sector view required to enable a more strategic consideration of opportunities as mining transitions in the region. Both of these initiatives enable planning to support sustainable growth and transition in regional and rural communities.

I will give some examples of where the regional leadership networks have delivered various activities to support the delivery of work plans. The Mackay-Isaac-Whitsunday network continues to support the implementation of the Moranbah emergency services cadet program to increase youth engagement and develop future regional leaders. The north-west network is working with Regional Development Australia to create a workforce development road map to address workforce attraction and retention challenges. The Wide Bay-Burnett network is the pilot for a better understanding of the cumulative impacts of the major projects pipeline for Far North Queensland. The network has commenced engagement and research to develop guiding principles for meaningful and culturally appropriate engagement with regional, remote and discrete communities.

On the Darling Downs and south-west, the network has engaged with relevant agencies, in partnership with the Office of the Cross-Border Commissioner, to better understand service delivery challenges in border communities. In the Central Queensland network, they are working across agencies to better understand and respond to the community priorities within the Woorabinda community. As you can see, it is right across Queensland and that links back to government to ensure that their voices are heard and their issues are being addressed and taken on board and that we, as a government, are governing for all of the state of Queensland.

Mr G KELLY: Minister, can you please update the committee on the Country Roads Connect Program and how this funding will benefit regional and rural communities?

Mr LAST: This is an issue very dear to the member's heart, as it is to mine. Durable and reliable road infrastructure is important to sustain local economies and promote connectivity and thriving communities. That is why the Department of Natural Resource and Mines, Manufacturing and Regional and Rural Development has been working closely with the Department of Transport and Main Roads to establish and deliver the Country Roads Connect funding program. This program is an election commitment, with \$100 million allocated over a four-year period to improve resilience and safety in regional communities. The funding will support unsealed regional and rural roads that serve communities and producers and that provide access for emergency vehicles. These roads are most at risk of becoming impassable following severe weather events.

Sixty-six regional councils were eligible for the funding program, which opened in March 2025 and closed in May of this year. My department worked alongside the Department of Transport and Main Roads to develop the program's funding criteria, utilising our knowledge of regional and rural Queensland. They have also participated in assessing the nominations, with the successful nominations to be announced in due course. Importantly, this work will be delivered by local governments over a four-year period and will complement other programs offered by the Queensland government.

This is about simple things like a school bus taking children to school. We take that for granted in the south-east corner of this state; however, in some of the rural areas they are driving on unsealed roads. In wet weather, in many cases those buses stop running or are damaged beyond repair. That is when you truly appreciate the impact that those roads are having on families, businesses and communities right throughout Queensland. It is an issue that we are committed to dealing with and to resolving. Certainly, the feedback already from local governments has been overwhelmingly positive.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister, for your response. We will go to non-government questions.

Mr KATTER: Referring to page 1 of the SDS, increasing gas supply is one of the key drivers for economic growth in the north-west as affordable energy. Recently, Glencore told the ABC that energy costs are the crux, as their energy costs are roughly double what they might be in China. Queensland has an abundance of gas and the north-west uses two per cent of it. Will the minister work with the Queensland gas producers to ensure long-term gas supply of \$10 a gigajoule to help the likes of Phosphate Hill get on an equal footing with overseas competitors?

Mr LAST: As I have stated during the course of this estimates hearing, I have granted 15 petroleum leases within the state government and that equates to more than half of the 27 petroleum leases granted by the previous government. When it comes to gas supply in this state, Queensland has a good story to tell. We have ample reserves of gas and we have a lot of interest in that space. We do not have a gas crisis in Queensland like the southern states do. I appreciate the importance of gas supply, particularly to the phosphate plant that the member for Traeger is talking about. I have a meeting next week with my counterpart in the Northern Territory to discuss the supply of gas across the border from the Northern Territory which as we know was turned off last year. That caused a lot of problems, forcing that company to purchase gas at an inflated price.

Our message is very clear: increasing gas supply in Queensland helps ensure there is enough fuel for electricity generation across the National Electricity Market. This keeps the electricity system reliable and prices more stable. The Australian Energy Regulator has consistently highlighted the role that gas plays in setting electricity prices, especially during peak periods, when gas-fired generation is often dispatched. When there is more gas available the price of gas tends to go down, and when the gas prices go down the cost of generating electricity using gas also goes down. That is why boosting Queensland's gas supply in the east coast gas market matters. That is why we are doing what we are doing.

I have recently released nine new areas for gas exploration—nearly 17,000 square kilometres across the Cooper-Eromanga and Bowen-Surat basins—to boost future supply. Importantly, 1,000 square kilometres of the areas released this year will have the Australian domestic market supply condition applied to ensure any gas produced is supplied exclusively to our east coast gas market, providing energy for Queensland's industries, businesses and homes into the future.

We are not resting there, though. We are not resting on our laurels. To ensure we continue to attract new investment into our resources sector, my department has recently opened a new targeted expression-of-interest process to nominate areas for gas, coal and minerals exploration. That will create a pipeline of projects into the future, enhancing rural and regional economic development opportunities and, importantly, leading to new sources of potential gas that can be supplied to domestic and export markets.

Mr KATTER: Point of order—have you finished now, Minister?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Do you have a point of order, member for Traeger?

Mr KATTER: Building on that point—the price went from \$3 to \$4 a gigajoule. It went north to 20 and 30. It has settled down to somewhere between 15 and 18. Is there going to be any consideration in the context of Phosphate Hill and its relationship with the copper smelter? Does it not warrant any special consideration in the context of that response? You have said you would not consider it federally. Given the role Phosphate Hill plays in the fertiliser plant and copper smelter, does it not warrant special consideration?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member, that is not a point of order, but I can take it as a further question.

Mr KATTER: Sorry, it was not meant as a point of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member. Minister, would you like to respond to the question, please?

Mr LAST: Everything is on the table when it comes to securing the future of that copper smelter. Our discussions with both Glencore and the federal government have been very wideranging and have embraced a number of initiatives that we might consider at both the state and the federal government level in which to guarantee the future of that particular smelter. We do not support a domestic gas reserve; however, we are out there actively promoting development and bringing on new tenements to increase gas supply, which will drive down prices. When it comes to the continued operation of the copper smelter at Mount Isa, we are looking at all options, member for Traeger.

Mr KATTER: Just to be clear: if the federal government moved towards a domestic reserve, would the state still maintain that position? Let me say it this way: will the state maintain that position regardless of the federal government's position?

Mr LAST: I am happy to answer that, Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Traeger, that is a hypothetical question.

Mr KATTER: I appreciate that.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister, if you do not object you can answer, but it is a hypothetical question.

Mr LAST: It is a hypothetical question. As we know, the federal government are looking in that space, and we would like to think that we will be consulted during that process.

Mr KATTER: We have not touched on CopperString today. It impacts heavily on the manufacturing base in Mount Isa and on the closure of the copper smelter. Given that a final investment decision and the viability of some of those future mines rest heavily on that, as you mentioned before, has the minister had discussions with the Treasurer on shoring up when that will be delivered?

Mr LAST: The timeframes around the delivery of CopperString are well documented. We have committed to delivering that project. The Treasurer has recently travelled from Townsville to Mount Isa, meeting with all of the local governments and stakeholders along the highway. It is absolutely crucial, as I said previously, that we deliver reliable and affordable power into that area. If we are going to develop the North West Minerals Province, that will be very important. It is not just the direct line to Mount Isa; it is the offshoots, as you would appreciate. Some of these mines are off the highway. They are up in the gulf area. They are north of Cloncurry. That has now formed part of how we roll this project out moving forward.

Mr KATTER: Has the minister or his department discussed the viability of existing mines in that area and played that back to Treasury? You spoke about Little Eva and their reliance on that. From what I can see, that plays a role in the decision-making going forward.

Mr LAST: I will just pass across to the director-general to answer that one.

Mr Fraine: You made reference to the discussions around Eva as an example. We know that for many mines in the north-west province, as throughout the rest of the state, input costs around energy, water and transport are key factors when making a financial investment decision. Are we in discussions with Treasury colleagues, and are we having discussions of this nature around input costs such as energy? The minister has talked about Eva, and there are broader conversations that are happening in that space.

Mr KATTER: Notwithstanding the comment you have already made about the rail incentives, you just mentioned water and power. The rail track fees are three or four times higher than the next highest track fees in Australia. There are unique competition guidelines that restrict business activity on that. Have discussions been had with Treasury, outside of monetary incentives, to unlock the potential through rail?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member, was that question to the director-general or to the minister?

Mr KATTER: It is for the director-general.

Mr Fraine: As I mentioned, as part of looking at how a future can be secured for the North West Minerals Province, a range of the input costs for resource proponents is in the mix for discussions with colleagues in government.

Mr KATTER: So it is in the mix?

Mr Fraine: As I just said, we have a broad range of discussions.

Mr KATTER: Last question: Minister, it probably comes up every estimates, but I see a great opportunity in manufacturing in this state's biofuels, and I am mindful of the inquiry that is going on at the moment. One of the major producers in this country that shut down was the United Petroleum plant.

I think they will all agree that the biggest reason was the lack of offtake from the lack of a mandate or from the lack of an enforced mandate. Does the minister have any intention to strengthen mandates to provide offtake and encourage investment in that manufacturing sector?

Mr LAST: There is certainly a lot of movement in the biofuels space at the moment. There are a lot of projects right across the state. For example, in my home electorate of Burdekin there is a massive project underway involving cane trash. It is certainly an area that we are very interested in and we will look at the flow-on effects that it might have. Have we considered mandating it? Not at this point, but we are certainly encouraging the expansion of the biofuels industry in Queensland. We look forward to working with those proponents to bring some of those projects to fruition.

Mr MARTIN: I note in last year's estimates you had a keen interest in the intersection between health care and regional development. I am sure you remember, but, for the benefit of the committee, I will table the relevant part of last year's estimates hearing transcript. Given that, can you guarantee that the maternity services the LNP has promised to deliver at Biloela will be delivered by GPs?

Mr BENNETT: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker: I am wondering whether this question should have been directed to the health minister. I seek your ruling on that.

Mr MARTIN: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker: it is definitely relevant. It was relevant in last year's estimates. I note that the chair of the estimates committee hearing last year allowed the question. I also note that it was the minister, the then shadow minister, who asked a similar question. I refer to the SDS, which talks about one of the key deliverables being to lead regional collaboration across departments. In addition, his charter letter talks about working with relevant ministers in areas like health and education.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you for both points of order. To the specific nature of the question, that is clearly within the remit of the Minister for Health. However, I take the point about collaboration across agencies. The minister himself has spoken about that previously. Minister, please answer in that respect.

Mr LAST: I take a great deal of interest in health and education services in the bush. I can assure you that the commitment to restore maternity services at Biloela remains. That will continue to be a commitment over the course of this term.

Mr MARTIN: I follow on, then, to teachers, and specifically teachers in rural and regional Queensland. We can hear them outside today. They are not happy with how they have been treated by this government. Will you commit to meeting with teachers to discuss what can be done to assist and retain teachers in rural and regional Queensland?

Mr BENNETT: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker: could the question be rephrased without the inferences around the issues outside?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is a valid point of order. Member for Stretton, could you put the question again without the inferences or imputations.

Mr MARTIN: I am happy to rephrase it. Minister, in relation to teachers in rural and regional communities—we can hear them outside today—will you commit to meeting with representatives from the QTU to discuss their claims, specifically in relation to rural and regional teachers?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister, similar to the last question, I note that quite a bit of the substance of the question relates to the Minister for Education, who will appear tomorrow. In terms of collaboration in rural and regional Queensland, you can answer the question.

Mr LAST: I spend a significant amount of time in all my schools. In my role as minister, when I travel around the state I never miss an opportunity to visit schools to talk to the teachers. These are the people responsible for our future—for teaching our students. It is so important that we support our teachers and the great work that they do in our schools right across Queensland. I will give you an example. Last Sunday I was at the Moranbah markets and the local teacher union representative came up and we had a very fruitful conversation. I will continue to liaise with teachers right across the state, and particularly in my electorate, and support them in the work that they do.

Mr MARTIN: But will you go outside and meet with them today?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member, I think the minister has answered your question.

Mr MARTIN: I will take it as a 'no', then.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: You cannot take it as that. Do you have another question?

Mr MARTIN: Yes, I have another question. Minister, have you been aware of any impacts on rural and regional development given the removal of the health rural and regional workforce incentive scheme?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Could you repeat that question, please?

Mr MARTIN: I have gone back to health. Minister, have you been made aware of any impacts to rural and regional development given the removal of the health rural and regional workforce incentive scheme?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister, as it relates to your portfolio, could you answer, please.

Mr LAST: Along with my schools, I spend a lot of time in my hospitals and working to ensure that the provision of health services to the bush is of a similar level to that provided to our city cousins. It is something very dear to me. I do not know whether the member is aware, but I fought for five years to get a doctor to Clermont. It was a long-running battle, but we succeeded. Down here we take for granted that we can walk down to the corner and visit a doctor. It is not so easy when you live in the bush. Attracting and retaining medical practitioners is an issue right across rural and regional Queensland. It is something that we are committed to doing.

When it comes to rural and regional development, it is all about advocating for the unique needs of and opportunities for regional and rural communities. It is about ensuring their voices influence the decision-making and shape policy and program development. As I said, when I conduct my regional forums I make it very clear that I will be their voice straight into cabinet. I will represent their views and concerns. We are already seeing the results of that. When issues are raised and I speak about them with other ministers, they are actioned in a very short timeframe in many cases. Those rural communities are very appreciative that finally their voices are being listened to and that we are acting to address their needs, particularly in the areas of education and health services.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: We will move to government members' questions.

Mr G KELLY: Noting the government's commitment to advanced manufacturing technologies, can the minister please outline what funding has been allocated to the ARM Hub and how this is supporting Queensland manufacturers?

Mr LAST: The mission of the Advanced Robotics for Manufacturing, ARM, Hub is to accelerate the creation and adoption of next generation technologies and to grow the nation's industrial capability. For those who have not been out to visit the ARM Hub, I would thoroughly recommend that you do. The work that they are doing is absolutely extraordinary—it is next generation, futuristic and very innovative. The Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing and Rural and Regional Development administers a four-year funding agreement with the ARM Hub to support it to deliver services for Queensland manufacturers. The government has committed \$16.51 million to the ARM Hub, with funding until March 2028.

The ARM Hub delivers activities to: support companies to adopt advanced robotics, advanced manufacturing and design-led manufacturing practices; assist Queensland industry to adopt Industry 4.0; increase the productivity and international competitiveness of Queensland companies through accessing services from the ARM Hub; and increase the number of highly skilled Queensland jobs.

In March 2025, the ARM Hub held the ARM Hub industry day to mark five years of operation. This event showcased innovation and collaboration across the manufacturing sector. Over its first five years of operation, the ARM Hub's impact on Queensland's manufacturing industry includes: 160 businesses participating in or pursuing projects with the ARM Hub, delivering \$107 million worth of projects; 310 site visits and Industry 4.0 needs assessments conducted; over 12,000 people engaged in face-to-face and online events; 14 new products developed by ARM Hub members and tenants; and 120 science, technology, engineering, mathematics and design interns and graduates from TAFE and university. The Queensland government continues to monitor the ARM Hub's performance through key performance indicators including benchmarks for regional industry engagement, private investment and interstate and international participation in ARM Hub projects.

There are also specific regional targets within this ARM Hub agreement. Examples of companies that have successfully accessed the ARM Hub include Voltin, which became involved with the ARM Hub after winning the ARM Hub Sprints Accelerator in 2022. This enabled Voltin to access support for the development of the AutoBAT, a technology to automate inspections of building facades. In 2025, Voltin secured a place in Advance Queensland scale-up accelerator to expand their global reach. Over time the ARM Hub has helped Voltin generate more than \$1 million in research and development funding.

The Young Guns Container Crew engaged the ARM Hub to help automate the unpacking of shipping containers. Through this engagement a prototype of new-to-the-world logistics automation technology has been developed. This technology has improved productivity in the container unloading process between 25 per cent to 50 per cent and led to the expansion of their Australian and international customer network.

Member for Mirani, in the not-too-distant future, as we saw on my last visit, you will be served at your local Macca's by a robot. That technology is being finalised as we sit here today.

Mr DALTON: Minister, can you explain the role of the Northern Australia Ministerial Forum and how this contributes to the prosperity of rural and regional communities in North Queensland?

Mr LAST: One of my key priorities is to maximise benefits to all Queenslanders through leveraging strong intergovernmental relations for the development of Northern Australia. I will represent Queensland at the next Northern Australia Ministerial Forum and coordinate Queensland's response to Australian government policy for the development of Northern Australia.

The forum is chaired by the Australian government minister with responsibility for the development of Northern Australia. Other forum members include the Australian government Minister for Indigenous Australians and my counterparts from the Western Australian and Northern Territory governments.

Together we will work collaboratively to drive long-term economic growth and deliver a shared vision for Northern Australia. The priorities outlined in the Commonwealth government's Northern Australia Action Plan 2024-2029 closely align with those of the Queensland government. The forum will focus on the following key areas: ensuring a safe and secure north; fostering growth in the northern workforce and economy; and supporting livable, healthy and resilient communities.

In September 2024 forum members agreed to establish a Northern Australia Housing Working Group to identify shared challenges and opportunities between the participating jurisdictions. The housing working group is comprised of executive leadership from all forum jurisdictions.

To further support the development of manufactured housing is one key solution. The manufacturing division of my department held a modern methods of construction round table in late 2024. It involved modular and manufactured housing providers, the Commonwealth Bank, and state and Australian government stakeholders. The round table was an opportunity to discuss challenges and opportunities facing the sector. As a result, the Commonwealth Bank changed their financing model for modular housing to remove barriers. For example, previously borrowers were required to pay 90 per cent up-front costs for a modular build. The Commonwealth Bank will change its policy so borrowers can access up to 60 per cent of the construction costs through progress payments.

I have a quick update. In recent times the Commonwealth Bank has partnered with Queensland-based modular home builder Oly Homes to nearly triple its output of prefabricated residential dwellings in a show of faith for the sector.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister, there was one question where the director-general was going to come back with some further details.

Mr Fraine: Just to confirm for the member for Woodridge, in terms of attendance from State Development officers at the regional forum, there were two State Development officers present at the Roma forum. There were no officers from that department at the Emerald forum, but the chair of our regional leadership network, who was there on behalf of a range of government agencies, attended that forum.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Director-General.

Mr BENNETT: With the limited time we have left, I think it is important that we talk about the government's work in supporting cropping farmers who experienced those disasters in the floods.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister, you have two minutes.

Mr LAST: Following the 2024 state election, ministerial oversight of the Rural and Regional Adjustment Act fell within my portfolio responsibilities. QRIDA was principally established to administer schemes of financial assistance to the Queensland government and on occasion the Australian government. Since coming to office, this government has increased assistance provided under natural disaster schemes and has broadened the availability of assistance to primary producers with respect to coverage of replanting costs and expanding the definition of primary producers to include income from agricultural support services such as harvesting and mustering—and that will commence shortly.

QRIDA also delivers a range of business support for primary producers, small businesses and not-for-profits impacted by natural disasters made available under the joint Commonwealth-state Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements. In particular, clean-up and recovery grants were made available for the three most recent disasters. Expanding the definition of primary producers may not mean much to city folk but it certainly makes a difference to those people who live in regional and rural Queensland. I commend the work that QRIDA have done following the wet weather events and the disaster events earlier this year and the assistance that they have rolled out across this state.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. The session has expired. Would you like to thank anyone before we close the session? Otherwise I will close it out ultimately.

Mr LAST: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I thank the committee today for their involvement and for the commitment to the work that they do. I thank my director-general, Graham Fraine, and I thank Sally Stannard for coming along today. I thank my chief of staff Ally Foley. I thank my deputy directors-general who have assisted: Amy Rosanowski, Celia Venables, Jason Kidd and Paul Hoffmann. I thank my acting deputy director-general, Darren Moor. I thank our executive director, Gobind Kalsi, or Gobes as he is known. Thank you, Gobes, for your work. I thank Clemence Thompson, Rima Ismail Jones, Martin Reside and their teams.

I thank the Valuer-General, Laura Dietrich; RSHQ CEO Rob Djukic; Land Access Ombudsman Jane Pires; Coexistence Queensland CEO Warwick Squire; Titles Queensland CEO Nikki Alder; QRIDA CEO Cameron MacMillan; and all the staff in my ministerial office. It is Cameron MacMillan's last day today. We talk about dedication to the role. He has made his last day estimates. That is a commitment—that he would give up his last day to come to estimates! I want to thank all my ministerial staff for their support and the work they have put into this. I could not be more proud of the team that we have.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Minister. We have reached the end of the time allocated for consideration of the proposed expenditure for the areas of responsibility administered by the Minister for Natural Resources and Mines, Minister for Manufacturing and Minister for Regional and Rural Development. There were no questions taken on notice. Thank you, Minister, officials and departmental officers, for your attendance. The committee will now suspend until 2 pm, when we will examine the estimates for the portfolio areas of the Minister for Primary Industries.

Proceedings suspended from 1.17 pm to 2.00 pm.

ESTIMATES—PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE— PRIMARY INDUSTRIES

In Attendance

Hon. AJ Perrett, Minister for Primary Industries

Mr Matt Jensen, Chief of Staff

Ms Kathleen Cairns, Senior Parliamentary and Strategy Advisor

Department of Primary Industries

Mr Graeme Bolton, Director-General

Ms Justine Clark, Deputy Director-General, Corporate

Dr Rachel Chay, Deputy Director-General and Chief Biosecurity Officer



Mr SPEAKER: Good afternoon. We will now resume proceedings. For the benefit of those who have just joined us, I am Pat Weir, the member for Condamine and Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. Under the provisions of the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001, I will preside over today's hearing. The members of the Primary Industries and Resources Committee are: Mr Stephen Bennett, the member for Burnett and chair; Mr James Martin, the member for Stretton and deputy chair; Mr Nigel Dalton, the member for Mackay; Mr Robbie Katter, the member for Traeger; Mr Glen Kelly, the member for Mirani; and Mr Tom Smith, the member for Bundaberg. The committee is joined by other members who have been granted leave to attend and ask questions at the hearing today.

I remind everyone present that any person may be excluded from the proceedings at the chair's discretion or by order of the committee. The committee has authorised its hearings to be broadcast live, televised and photographed. Copies of the committee's conditions for broadcasters of proceedings are available from the secretariat. Staff who are assisting our witnesses here today are permitted to use personal electronic devices in the chamber. I ask all present to ensure that phones and other electronic devices are switched to silent mode or turned off if not in use. I also remind everyone that food and drink is not permitted in this chamber.

The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure in the Appropriation Bill 2025 for the primary industries portfolio area until 5.45 pm. We will adjourn for a short break between 3.45 pm and 4 pm. I remind honourable members that matters relating to these portfolio areas can only be raised during the time specified for the area, as was agreed by the House. I refer members to the program set by the House, which is available throughout the chamber and on the committee's webpage. I also remind everyone that these proceedings are subject to the standing rules and orders of the Legislative Assembly. With respect to government owned corporations and statutory authorities, standing order 180(2) provides that a member may ask any question the committee determines will assist in its examination of the relevant appropriation bill or otherwise assist the committee to determine whether public funds are being efficiently spent or appropriate public guarantees are being provided.

On behalf of the committee I welcome the minister, director-general, officials and departmental officers and members of the public. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask officials and advisers to identify themselves the first time they answer a question referred to them by the minister or director-general. Please remember to press your microphone on before you start speaking and off when you are finished. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of primary industries open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Minister, if you wish you may make an opening statement of no more than five minutes.

Mr PERRETT: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and good afternoon, Chair and members of the committee. It is a privilege to appear here for the first time as Minister for Primary Industries. I do not take this position for granted. As I travel around this state meeting with and listening to hardworking primary producers, I am humbled that I am now in a position to drive positive change for Queensland.

Queensland's agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors are the backbone of our regions, supporting more than 41,000 businesses and 70,200 people in 2023-24. Many rural and regional communities are built on the back of primary industries. Queensland's primary industries contributed

\$22.66 billion in gross value of production to the state's economy in 2023-24 and employed 376,000 people, or nearly 13 per cent of the workforce.

The \$817.2 million primary industries budget reflects the Crisafulli government's unwavering commitment to the sector. These funds are targeted: driving innovation, building resilience and supercharging growth across agriculture, biosecurity, fisheries and forestry. Central to our vision will be our Primary Industries Prosper 2050 blueprint, which sets an ambitious, but achievable, goal of growing Queensland's primary production output to \$30 billion by 2030. None of this can be achieved without collaboration. We are working closely with industry bodies, local governments, research partners, supply chain partners, investment institutions and regional communities to ensure our policies and programs are practical, effective and responsive to the needs of those on the ground. Our blueprint will be delivered through seven regionally based five-year action plans to ensure real world outcomes, help drive investment, create jobs and unlock opportunities. This is supported by whole-of-government investment and a \$30 million Sowing the Seeds of Farming Innovation Fund.

The incredible resilience and innovation of our primary producers sees them continue to deliver despite challenges of weather events and global market disruptions. Importantly, this budget commits \$51.9 million over the next four years to support farm and drought resilience programs. Our programs will work secure in the knowledge that we are committed to bolstering biosecurity efforts with \$60.9 million over five years and \$19.2 million ongoing from 2029-30 for 100 additional frontline biosecurity officers.

The Crisafulli government has delivered more for the Queensland primary industries sector in the last 10 months than Labor did in the last 10 years. Since our election we have: co-designed with industry a 25-year blueprint for Queensland's primary industries—Primary Industries Prosper 2050; commenced co-designing the seven regionally based action plans; recruited the first 13 of 100 frontline biosecurity officers; delivered record investment of \$88.2 million over four years to implement the biggest enhancement to the Queensland Shark Control Program in 63 years; reviewed the updated science following the 2022 Spanish mackerel changes; removed investment warnings that have affected commercial fishers for a decade; co-designed a draft landmark timber action plan; secured arrangements for Mossman sugarcane growers to harvest and transport their 2025 crop; and committed \$4.5 million in funding for Beef Week 2027. We have delivered: a record investment of an additional \$24 million over two years for fire ant suppression; \$2.3 million for the wild dog barrier fence; \$1 million in new funding for regionally focused action plans to deal with feral pigs; \$940,000 towards a planning and feasibility study for the Blackall Woolscour project; and \$500,000 to respond to varroa mite.

We have secured historic disaster recovery funding arrangements to: provide an unprecedented \$105 million to rebuild exclusion fencing; allow affected primary producers to access funding for replanting, fertiliser and other activities to re-establish destroyed crops; and change the definition of 'primary producer' to allow more farmers to access support. The investments and initiatives outlined in this year's budget, combined with the strategic direction of the Primary Industries Prosper 2025 blueprint, will ensure Queensland's primary industries are profitable, productive, sustainable for future generations and remain a cornerstone of Queensland's economy and way of life.

I acknowledge the support of my department, led by my director-general, Graeme Bolton, who is here with me today. I look forward to discussing these matters further and welcome your questions.

Mr SPEAKER: We will take the first questions from the opposition. Member for Bundaberg?

Mr SMITH: Minister, thank you for being here today. Yesterday Acting Police Commissioner Shane Chelepy said that stealing cattle, stealing equine equipment and suspicion of stealing stock was categorised as 'other theft' by Queensland police. Minister, are you aware of those comments?

Mr PERRETT: Before I proceed with my answers, in accordance with my publicly available register of interests I advise the committee that I am a landowner and livestock producer, and I am a registered biosecurity entity and may be eligible for drought and disaster assistance.

That is a good question. I am certainly aware of the work of the rural crime squad. I have discussed matters about this with relevant ministers and the impact that it has. I acknowledge that. I know that theft can be damaging to producers and obviously their rural businesses because of the cost and inconvenience that goes with it, but more importantly it goes directly to their personal situation. Unfortunately, we are seeing more of that in this state, particularly in rural areas where thieves enter rural properties where there are absentee landowners. I acknowledge the member's comments and the issues that surround that. I also acknowledge the work of the Queensland police to deal with that.

Mr SMITH: Minister, I appreciate you taking on that important consideration of farm theft in terms of your portfolio. Last Tuesday the Premier said that 'other theft' crimes were victimless crimes. I am going to table an article from the *Daily Mercury* around Mr Dale William Odger from Mirani who had his cattle stolen. I will await the Speaker to advise when I can ask my question once the document is tabled.

Mr SPEAKER: We will get that to the minister. I call the member for Bundaberg.

Mr SMITH: There are two parts. The first one is a verification of the Premier's statement and the second one is the article from the *Daily Mercury*.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Bundaberg, do you have a question?

Mr SMITH: Minister, given that you have seen the article and Mr Dale William Odger's story about cattle being stolen, is the Premier correct that Dale from Mirani is not a victim of crime?

Dr ROWAN: Point of order, Mr Speaker: could I ask the member for Bundaberg to reference exactly where it says 'victimless crimes' in the originally tabled document? What page is that?

Mr SMITH: It is highlighted towards the end.

Mr SPEAKER: Is that in the first document?

Mr SMITH: It says on page 4—

'Other thefts' excluded from reported data

Mr Crisafulli acknowledged ... he provided were different to those published annually ...

... "other thefts", which Mr Crisafulli suggested ... relate to victimless crimes.

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, just be conscious that this is the agriculture portfolio. Cattle theft is a big issue so I will allow you to answer it as you see fit.

Mr PERRETT: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I acknowledge the issue around theft. Obviously, the QPS deals with these matters; they are not dealt with in my department but again I acknowledge the impact they have on rural businesses. While circumstances may vary from one crime to the next, they are still crimes and the impact is significant against those rural properties. Cattle theft is something that I am cognisant of. I think I may have been subject to that myself over the years.

Mr SMITH: Were you a victim of crime?

Mr PERRETT: Well, theft of cattle off our property. I understand the challenges that are around it and some of the people who are involved with that. Again, any of these matters directly relate to the Queensland Police Service, particularly that rural crime squad. I know many members of that rural crime squad and I know they work hard in a challenging environment given the nature of some of these activities and some of the nefarious types of people involved in it. Again, I am sure those questions on those issues would be best directed to the Minister for Police.

Mr SMITH: I will table an article by the *Courier-Mail* about 7,000 oysters which were stolen from an oyster farm in Oodgeroo earlier this year. Speaker, I will await your direction before my question.

Mr SPEAKER: Go ahead, member for Bundaberg.

Mr SMITH: Bulimba Oyster Company owner Kieron Gait said that not only was it a 'crushing blow to our morale' but it jeopardised the Queensland oyster supply chain. Given the Premier's words, is the Premier correct that Mr Gait from Oodgeroo is not a victim of crime?

Dr ROWAN: Point of order, Mr Speaker: I still fail to see the exact quote. I do see the line now which the member for Bundaberg is presumably referring to, but it says—

This is because it does not include the category of "other thefts", which Mr Crisafulli suggested could relate to victimless crimes. I do not see the actual quote from Mr Crisafulli that is being raised as part of the question—that there is a direct quote.

Mr BENNETT: Point of order, Mr Speaker: the latest document that has been tabled refers to issues that happened in 2023 and I would argue that that line of questioning is out of order because it is referencing the previous government's regime.

Mr SMITH: So those victims do not matter?

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Bundaberg, you are asking the minister to comment on a comment by the Premier. I do not really see—

Mr SMITH: If I may, on a point of order—

Mr SPEAKER: If you just want to ask about rural crime, I am happy for you to talk about rural crime, but I caution you against asking the minister to comment on the comments of another minister or the Premier.

Mr SMITH: If I may, on a point of order: the minister did acknowledge in my first question how serious it is when we talked about farm theft and crimes impacting on the industry. The Premier, ultimately, is in charge of government direction and therefore is overseeing all ministers. The question is: for people who have had their cattle stolen or oysters destroyed on their farm, under the term of 'other theft' are they victims of crime?

Mr SPEAKER: If you ask a question directly like that, I am happy to allow it, but if you are asking for the minister to give an opinion on a comment by someone else, I am sorry, but I will rule it out of order. You work out how you ask it. Whether the question goes forward or not is going to depend on how you reword it.

Mr BENNETT: Point of order, Mr Speaker: I did reference that it was 2023. How can we ask a question from so far back and keep it relevant to this portfolio at the appropriation hearing?

Mr SPEAKER: I am going to allow it in the sense of rural crime overall.

Dr ROWAN: Point of order, Mr Speaker: as in my previous point of order, I do not see a direct quote from the Premier in the documents that were tabled. I see a line in a reference but I do not see a direct quote there and I think that is important.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Moggill, I just said that the member is not to quote other members. Member for Bundaberg, back to you.

Mr SMITH: Minister, for individuals such as Mr Kieron Gait and indeed yourself who said that you have been a victim of these crimes, do these crimes fall into the category of 'other theft' and are those individuals such as yourself victims of crime?

Mr PERRETT: Obviously, those determinations are not made by the Department of Primary Industries; they are clearly made by the Queensland Police Service. However, I am happy to reiterate the impact they have. Clearly, the member has a concern, as I do, around theft and the impact of rural crime on businesses financially and emotionally, and then there is the particular cost of being able to reinstate. I absolutely understand the impact of rural crime. I am confident that the Queensland Police Service's rural crime squad does a magnificent job dealing with this in challenging circumstances. They gather the evidence they need and, more importantly, they bring charges before the courts here in Queensland to make certain the perpetrators of these crimes are brought to justice. This is something that is important to all of Queensland, not just rural landholders. I am certainly aware of the impact and I know that a lot of farms and properties are now increasing their security surveillance and methods they use to protect what they have.

Even in my electorate I have seen more and more of that. It is significant, the unscrupulous methods that some of these people in our community use to attack our productive sector. I know that the member is aware of this. These are our food producers, the people who put food on our table, who contribute to economic opportunity in our state and, in a lot of cases, our export opportunities.

Member, you make the point in and around rural crime, and I accept that. Questions could be put to the Minister for Police in the future with respect to these matters. Certainly in terms of the primary industry production sector, I accept that there is an issue broadly with rural crime and we need to confront that and make certain that the police bring charges against people who conduct themselves that way.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Bundaberg, I have allowed you a bit of leeway on this subject. It is becoming repetitive. I am going to come back to you for further questions, but I just caution you.

Mr SMITH: Thank you, Speaker. I only have one more on this. It is a confirming question, if that is okay. Minister, do you accept that if a primary producer is a victim of theft they are a victim of crime?

Mr SPEAKER: That is an opinion. I will let you answer it as you will.

Mr PERRETT: Any crime is a crime, whether that is against households or against our rural community and our rural producers. It is something this state has confronted for a long period of time. Whether now we are in government or under previous governments, we have seen certain activities in this state that target certain producers in different ways. In some cases, the methods they use differ from the traditional methods, and it is really disturbing that we have people in this state who attack the people who put the food on our tables—people who in some cases are battling and who struggle. The last thing they can afford is to lose livestock or produce. You mentioned oysters. It does not matter what

it is, it has an impact. I know the emotional toll this it has on people. People struggle through these situations. They act in good faith. A lot of times in the past they did not lock their doors and left the keys in their vehicles. Now they have to be much more mindful of the activities that are conducted by these people. It is really quite concerning that that impact is there.

Another issues that I know is affecting primary industry is copper and metal theft. I have spoken in the parliament about that issue and how it affects not only our everyday activities but also our rural businesses. The cost to those industries to replace the wiring and the disruption it causes is great—and then it may be stolen again.

Rural crime is something that has been around, dating back many decades and centuries. The methods that are used now, adapting with the times, are unfortunately creating great challenges. Certainly, I acknowledge the issue of rural crime. Obviously, anything we can do to support the QPS we will do, in and around that, to make certain we can bring the perpetrators of these crimes to justice.

Mr SMITH: I will go to the member for Stretton. Minister, I just want to say thank you for your open and honest answer with regard to those victims. Thank you.

Mr MARTIN: Minister, since your appointment as Minister for Primary Industries, how many ministerial staff in your office have had their employment terminated or have resigned?

Mr PERRETT: We have a great ministerial office. I do not think there has been any. We have one young fella who has done social media; he has just taken a bit of leave to further his studies, which I commend. He has been a great contributor to my office. He will be back later in the year. I do not think we have any—zero. No, there is a lot of stability in my office.

Mr MARTIN: Minister, are you aware of any of your ministerial staff having been gifted free parking at the Star's Queen's Wharf hotel and casino?

Mr PERRETT: No. I am certainly unaware of that.

Mr MARTIN: Minister, are you aware of any internal complaints to the Department of the Premier and Cabinet from a ministerial staff member in your office towards another ministerial staff member?

Mr PERRETT: Certainly none that have been drawn to my attention.

Mr SMITH: Speaker, I wish to table a copy of the minister's charter letter. Again, I will await your discretion for my question.

Mr SPEAKER: The minister probably knows what is in this letter.

Mr PERRETT: We will wait.

Mr SMITH: I hope so. Director-General, welcome. Do you have a copy of the charter letter? Director-General, with reference to the minister's charter letter, what authorising powers under the Biosecurity Act do biosecurity officers have, and how do the roles of biosecurity officers differ to general staff within the office of biosecurity?

Mr Bolton: I might hand across to my deputy director-general in a minute to give a more fulsome answer, but, as you would probably appreciate, we have a range of officers who are employed by Biosecurity Queensland including various officers who are authorised underneath the act in particular. We are, in fact, the most regionally distributed state of Australia and we have staff right across the whole state. Our biosecurity officers are located throughout the state and actively work with industry in the community to improve awareness around legislative obligations and improve compliance outcomes.

Biosecurity Queensland takes decisive enforcement action when necessary to ensure individuals, businesses and organisations are sufficiently managing biosecurity risks within their control, and the various enforcement measures also include stakeholder engagement, advisory letters, penalty infringement notices and court prosecutions when necessary. I will call forward the Deputy Director-General, Biosecurity to talk more about the specifics of the Biosecurity Act.

Dr Chay: Biosecurity officers appointed under the Biosecurity Act have a very broad range of powers. Did the member seek clarification around a specific power under the act?

Mr SMITH: The question was for you. I am aware you have just come to the table. Director-General, with reference to the charter letter, what authorising powers under the Biosecurity Act do biosecurity officers have, and how do the roles of biosecurity officers differ to general staff within the office of biosecurity? What differentiates an officer from just a general staff member under the act?

Dr Chay: I would have to seek some clarification from my team and, through the director-general, come back to you before the end of the session, if that is okay.

Mr Bolton: If I may, member, I think I can answer that question. Under the Biosecurity Act, we have officers who go through specific training that then authorises them to undertake specific actions under that act. Other staff, like support staff—they might be project officers or policy officers—do not undertake compliance activity. They are still biosecurity officers, but they are not authorised to undertake compliance action under the act.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Bundaberg, we will take one more question from you before we do the changeover.

Mr SMITH: I do have a line of questioning on this, so I wonder if, Speaker, it may be best if we secede and we can come back, or we can see if the member for—

Mr SPEAKER: We will go over here.

Mr SMITH: I do have a line of questioning, yes.

Mr BENNETT: Minister, I was excited to hear in your opening statement a reference to Spanish mackerel, because I love my fishing and I love Spanish mackerel. Can the minister advise the committee on the progress of the new Spanish mackerel stock assessment, please?

Mr PERRETT: I thank the member for Burnett for his excellent question. Spanish mackerel are an iconic fish in Queensland. They are highly sought after by commercial, recreational, charter and First Nations fishers. Spanish mackerel are also a family favourite in our fish and chip shops right across this beautiful state. I would like to start by reminding the committee: the Crisafulli government is committed to evidence-based decision-making through investment in world-class science, data and emerging technologies to support sustainable and adaptive fisheries management. It was with this commitment in mind that I sought a briefing from the department on the recent Spanish mackerel stock assessment. This stock assessment has been developed by departmental expert modellers with input and advice from a project team which included commercial and recreational fishing representatives, Mr Peter Stevens, Mr Ian Meads and independent scientist Dr Simon Hoyle. The recent stock assessment includes significant modelling improvements, as recommended by Dr Simon Hoyle and Dr Alistair Dunn in the independent review that was undertaken by the Queensland Seafood Industry Association in 2023.

The recent stock assessment estimates of spawning biomass of the east coast Spanish mackerel stock at the beginning of 2025 was between 17 per cent and 62 per cent of the unfished biomass, with a medium biomass estimate of 34 per cent of the unfished levels. This is double the previous stock assessment findings of just 17 per cent. Spanish mackerel are fast growing, highly reproductive and become reproductively mature at around two years of age. This was one of the key highlights of the independent review and revised stock assessment model. Under the former government, all Queensland fisheries were treated the same, irrespective of their individual biological characteristics. The current harvest strategy for Spanish mackerel sets a conservative target biomass of 60 per cent. This target level is more appropriate for slower growing and slower reproducing fish but not for the rabbits of the ocean.

Consistent with our commitment to make evidence-based decisions, I have approved the Department of Primary Industries to recommend amendments to the harvest strategy to set a new biomass target of 48 per cent of unfished biomass levels. This target aligns with targets set in other Spanish mackerel fisheries including Australian Commonwealth fisheries. Subject to the finalisation of the harvest strategy amendment, the chief executive intends to make a declaration under the Fisheries Act to increase commercial and recreational catch limits. Specifically, it is proposed that the recreational boat limit will double from two Spanish mackerel per boat to four Spanish mackerel per boat with four or more fishers on board. It is also proposed to increase the annual commercial total allowable catch from 165 tonnes to 250 tonnes. Subject to the amendment of the harvest strategy and the chief executive's declaration, it is expected these changes will take effect by the end of the year.

Other existing Spanish mackerel fishing rules will remain unchanged. This includes the minimum legal size limit of 75 centimetres, the charter fishing catch limit of one fish per person with no boat limit and the southern and northern Spanish mackerel closed seasons. These impending changes follow extensive consultation with experts and stakeholders including the Queensland Seafood Industry Association, industry working groups and the independent expert panel.

To further support recreational fishers, the department will also launch a new education and extension program called Mackerel Mates aimed at promoting best-practice recreational fishing and including tips on how to minimise shark depredation. These changes strike a better balance between

allowing fishers and seafood consumers to enjoy more of this prized catch while continuing to protect this valuable fishery for future generations.

Mr BENNETT: Minister, in your opening statement you spoke about the commitment to the landmark timber action plan. Will the minister advise how the department is working with key timber stakeholders to ensure the state has access to the timber required to build one million homes by 2044 by promoting the continuity of supply of state owned native timber and softwood plantation timber?

Mr PERRETT: I would like to thank the member Burnett for this question. As a former builder and a long-term serving QBuild employee, I know the member has a strong interest in timber supplies and in the future of our timber industry. It is a great question from a builder who understands the importance of such a wonderful resource.

When it comes to the forestry and timber industry we have seen nothing but vacillation from the former government over the last 10 years. By contrast, the Crisafulli government recognises the importance of Queensland's forest and timber industry, not only in respect of delivering on our commitment to build one million homes by 2044 but also in supporting regional economies and providing a sustainable resource for future generations. These are the homes that Queenslanders need.

As a builder, the member for Burnett knows how we need to support the timber industry to be able to deliver on this commitment. Timber is the ultimate sustainable and renewable resource. We are serious about securing Queensland's timber future and that starts by working directly with the people who grow, harvest and process our timber. There is no underestimating the valuable contribution the forestry and timber industry makes to our primary industries sector and to Queensland. The timber industry is built on hard work and dedication and we are implementing some smart planning so that it will keep delivering for this great state.

There is a Chinese proverb that says the best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago; the second best time is right now. That is why I am pleased to announce that the Crisafulli government is now releasing the draft Queensland Future Timber Plan for public consultation. I have copies of the draft Future Timber Plan with me for the committee. With your permission, Mr Speaker, I seek leave to table those documents.

Mr SPEAKER: Is leave granted?

Mr BENNETT: Indeed.

Mr SPEAKER: Leave is granted.

Mr PERRETT: This document is co-designed with industry and other key stakeholders and is a 25-year strategy that will sow the seeds for a blossoming future; a prosperous future framed by a five-year action plan to deliver a real tree change. The Queensland Future Timber Plan covers five key areas: securing sustainable timber supply for housing construction and infrastructure; establishing supply chain competitiveness on an international scale; developing better regulation for community benefit; building and retaining a viable fit for purpose workforce in rural and regional economies; and modernising and innovating the Queensland forestry and timber industry through research, development and extension programs. This plan is a key component for our *Primary Industries Prosper 2050* blueprint which sets an ambitious but achievable target of boosting Queensland's primary production output to \$30 billion by 2030.

Public consultation of the Queensland Future Timber Plan is now open and will continue for the next four weeks. Stakeholders can participate by attending webinar discussions, completing the survey or making a written submission to the Department of Primary Industries via the department's website. We will release the final Queensland Future Timber Plan and the first five-year action plan in October of this year. This will meet one of the key election commitments to deliver a landmark timber action plan for Queensland's forestry and timber industry within the first year of forming government.

Mr G KELLY: Minister, can you outline the progress of the rollout of the additional 100 biosecurity officers announced by the government?

Mr PERRETT: I thank the member for the question. I know the member has a strong interest in biosecurity which is important to his electorate of Mirani. As the member has mentioned, the Premier and I took a landmark commitment to last year's election of 100 additional regional biosecurity officers across this term of government. This will be a much-needed boost for our frontline, protecting Queensland from invasive weeds, diseases and species. I am pleased to update the House that the recruitment is progressing well. In June 2025, three regional biosecurity leads commenced duty; a further 10 positions have been filled; eight are in active recruitment; and three are out to market. It is

exciting to advise that we are on track to have 50 additional biosecurity officers in place by the end of this financial year.

Funding for the recruitment of the additional biosecurity officers is part of the \$110.9 million in new funding for Biosecurity Queensland in this year's 2025-26 state budget. These officers are being deployed to high-risk regional areas across the state including significant placements in north and western Queensland. It is important to note that previous governments have left critical gaps in frontline capacity in these areas of Queensland.

The Crisafulli government is delivering a permanent regionally based workforce. These officers are focused on early detection, surveillance, compliance and community engagement, which are essential to protect agriculture, the environment and our regional economies. Importantly, my department is using a risk-based model to guide deployment. That means boots on the ground where they are most needed and not where it is administratively convenient.

We are also working closely with local governments and the Regional Organisation of Councils to identify the needs-based approach. This role also responds to the 2023 Auditor-General's findings that Biosecurity Queensland needed to provide better on-ground support and strong coordination with local governments. We are acting. We are providing that support, and the new regional leads are now working alongside councils to improve local enforcement and planning. Industry has welcomed our actions. AgForce, Growcom, Greenlife and others have said this is the first time in years they have seen consistent, skilled field staff in regional areas. Colin Fruk, the CEO of Greenlife Industry, said—

... the Crisafulli government have put their money where their mouths are, backing in a strong biosecurity plan and strengthening the systems that protect our nursery and horticultural industries.

Our rollout of new additional biosecurity officers stands in contrast with the previous approach by the former Labor government, which had no surge response, no lasting investment and just delay and drift. The previous minister revealed in a question on notice that between 2015 and 2022 they had overseen a 22.2 per cent drop in the number of biosecurity staff. That is a loss of one in every five. This government has a clear biosecurity strategy backed by record funding, a growing workforce and national cooperation through programs like the National Fire Ant Eradication Program.

Our focus on strong biosecurity has also seen us increase suppression efforts. We have pressed the federal government to support us in our biosecurity efforts on suppression and match the Crisafulli government's record suppression funding. The Crisafulli government is taking biosecurity seriously and acting before it is too late. We are delivering on the front line.

Mr BENNETT: Would the minister explain how the Department of Primary Industries has been directly assisting primary producers affected by flooding events through the first half of 2025?

Mr PERRETT: Again, I thank the member for the question. The member is very interested in how we can support primary producers following natural disaster events such as the flooding earlier this year. As we all know, Queensland is no stranger to natural disasters and this year was no different. Three flooding and weather events across the north, west and south-east in the first half of this year caused devastation across agricultural regions and impacted communities, families, producers and their workers. I saw it firsthand on the many times I have been on the ground in both our state's north and our state's west.

Queenslanders are a resilient bunch and we know that. What they have been through is distressing. While primary producers have for generations dealt with adverse weather conditions, it is during these times that government assistance must meet the need for both the immediate aftermath and the long term. My department has been providing support both directly and through working with local government and third-party organisations.

Approximately 3,190 producers were impacted by the North and Far North Queensland weather event—floods; another 7,370 in the south-east event; and 646 in the west. Agricultural losses in the north and far north have been estimated to exceed \$816 million; in the south-east from Tropical Cyclone Alfred, \$2.14 billion in agricultural production losses across 16 activated local government areas—I know Gympie region was one and I think Bundaberg was also declared through that; and nine activated LGAs in the west reporting losses totalling another \$592 million.

Through the joint state-Commonwealth Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements, a suite of pre-approved measures were rolled out to support the community in response to and recovery from natural disasters. The main forms of assistance for primary producers are concessional loans of up to \$250,000, freight subsidies of up to \$5,000 and extraordinary recovery grants of up to \$75,000. For the Western Queensland surface trough event, concessional loans have been uplifted to \$5 million.

In addition, there have been extraordinary measures approved to support primary industries. These include \$13 million for the provision and distribution of emergency fodder across events and \$105 million exclusion fence rebuild program to provide grants of up to \$500,000, or half a million dollars, to eligible primary producers to rebuild damaged or destroyed exclusion fencing. The Western Queensland surface trough event also saw the department take the lead in the coordination of emergency fodder. This involved approximately 900 individual flights delivering 2,600 bales of hay. The longest flight to drop hay was 470 kilometres by Blackall to Tanbar via Black Hawk helicopter.

Mr SPEAKER: We will go to non-government members.

Mr SMITH: Director-General, noting the answers on biosecurity officers that the minister gave in government questions, I seek some clarification. Director-General, can you confirm whether you and your department have been instructed to employ 100 biosecurity officers authorised under the act or 100 biosecurity staff to be distributed across regional facilities within the Department of Primary Industries?

Mr Bolton: My understanding is that the election commitment talks about 100 frontline biosecurity officers. Those frontline biosecurity officers will comprise a range of different biosecurity staff. They could be staff who are authorised for compliance activities under the act. They could be staff who are engaged, such as support officers or project officers, to work with stakeholders around engagement and extension activities, where they work with our key primary producers around what they can do to better manage their biosecurity obligations including the implementation and development of biosecurity management plans.

The intent behind the 100 FTEs that have been committed—and we are in the process and have started recruiting—is that the majority of those will be authorised officers under the Biosecurity Act, but they will not all, and should not all, be authorised under the act. If I try to give an analogy, it is a bit like council employees: you have a set of council employees who are authorised to undertake compliance, such as parking or health inspectors, but not every single member of the staff is authorised to carry out that particular function. It is the same with the Biosecurity Act.

Mr SMITH: I appreciate the detail there. Just to confirm, you are basing that clarification on a direction given within the Service Delivery Statements, on page 2, of 100 additional biosecurity officers employed over five years?

Mr Bolton: Can I seek clarification about the question? I thought the question was in relation to the ministerial charter letter, and I quote—

Mr SMITH: This one is the SDS.

Mr Bolton:—‘an additional \$50 million investment over the next four years, employing 100 additional frontline biosecurity staff’.

Mr SMITH: Thank you. I am seeking clarification as to whether your direction comes through the SDS, which says ‘100 additional frontline biosecurity officers’ over five years, or you are taking your guidance from the charter letter, which says 100 additional biosecurity staff over four years.

Mr Bolton: ‘Staff’ and ‘officers’ are interchangeable. The SDS is absolutely accurate in terms of how we structure the funding over the next five years.

Mr SMITH: However, not all biosecurity staff will have authorised powers under the act; is that correct?

Mr Bolton: Not all biosecurity officers are authorised under the act and not all of those 100 FTEs will be authorised under the act, but all 100 FTEs will be frontline officers.

Mr SMITH: When we say ‘100 FTEs’, are we talking about individuals or hours equivalent?

Mr Bolton: We are talking 100 individual FTEs.

Mr SMITH: Minister, why the discrepancy in objectives outlined between your charter letter and the SDS? Is it because the Premier does not understand the difference?

Dr ROWAN: Point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: I am going to ask you to ask that question again or I will rule it out of order. There was a clear imputation in that question.

Mr SMITH: Minister, why the discrepancy between the SDS and the letter written to you by the Premier?

Mr PERRETT: The member is obviously interested in biosecurity and the important role that it plays across this state and particularly in increasing our frontline capacity, which is critical. The expectation is that there will be 100 new biosecurity officers in this term of government, and it is important that we back that in. With regard to those roles—and rightly so—the director-general and the department will oversee that recruitment process. They understand that best, but obviously the diversity across this state and some of the challenges from our coastal waters out into the western parts of this state can vary. We need officers who can adapt and respond to any particular issue and prevent issues, which is a key component of what we do. There is no doubt that some of the challenges that primary industries confront in this state from pest and weeds and threats are difficult, and that is why we have highlighted this particular issue and that is why we need frontline officers, and those 100 officers in this term of government are an important part of that plan that we took to the election and that we are implementing.

Mr SMITH: Director-General, just changing tack, on 26 February in an article about shark culls in the *Courier-Mail* the Premier pledged to make ‘our oceans safer for Queenslanders for generations’. I table those comments. Director-General, were you aware of those comments before I have just raised them today?

Mr SPEAKER: We will get this copy over to the director-general. I see that that section is highlighted. Director-General?

Mr Bolton: This is the first time that I have read this particular article, but thank you for bringing it to my attention.

Mr SMITH: So just to clarify, you have never been aware of those comments—‘our oceans safer for Queenslanders for generations’—until today?

Dr ROWAN: Mr Speaker, point of order: the director-general answered the previous question. The next question is virtually the same question as the previous question.

Mr SMITH: It is a clarifying question, Mr Speaker—just a confirmation.

Mr SPEAKER: I will allow the director-general to answer the question.

Mr SMITH: I think he did.

Mr Bolton: In particular with your interest to the shark control management plan from 2025 to 2029, which is what I believe the Premier is referring to, I can confirm that this new plan is the single biggest investment to strengthen the program since it started in 1962 and the plan also reaffirms that the primary purpose of the program is to reduce the risk of shark attacks at select beaches across our state. The department will receive an additional \$88.228 million over four years to strengthen the program, including through its operations, research and education. The new funding includes daily servicing, which is an increase from the previous once every two to once every three days, so that is where it is significantly strengthened for a cost of \$25.992 million. The expansion of the program to optimise new locations—

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, point of order: sorry to do this to the director-general, but my point of order is around relevance. The question was just a confirmation that the director-general had not ever heard that quote until I raised it today. I appreciate that he may wish to talk more about the shark program later to some of my other questions.

Mr SPEAKER: I am going to allow the director-general to round out his answer because he is talking specifically to that quote about making the oceans safer, so he is being relevant to the question. Director-General, you have the call.

Mr Bolton: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and I thank the member for the guidance. This includes the expansion of the program to new locations for \$7.133 million, making the temporary drone program permanent and expanding that to a further up to 10 beaches over the program for a cost of \$18.912 million, \$22.015 million for the existing catch alert drumline program, continue research and innovation to shark management for \$6.031 million, and a SharkSmart education campaign for \$4.547 million. Again, as I mentioned at the beginning, that is the single biggest strengthening of the program in its history since being established in 1962.

Mr SMITH: Director-General, is it correct that your department has been given an explanation in key performance indicators to fulfil the Premier’s promise to make ‘our oceans safer for Queenslanders for generations’?

Mr SPEAKER: That is fairly similar, Director-General, but I will let you answer it.

Mr Bolton: Can I just get you to restate that? I just want to be absolutely clear and I would hate to mislead the committee.

Mr SMITH: Absolutely, Director-General. Is it correct that your department has been given an explanation in key performance indicators to fulfil the Premier's promise to make 'our oceans safer for Queenslanders for generations'?

Mr Bolton: I thank the member for the clarification. No. To the best of my knowledge, we have not received any explanation of KPIs to fulfil that objective.

Mr SMITH: Director-General, under the Shark Management Plan 2025-2029, seven beaches were identified for new drumlines and nets from 1 July this year. Is it correct that drumlines and nets are lethal control measures that kill sharks in the ocean?

Mr Bolton: The Shark Control Program is comprised of a range of gear, which includes the traditional nets and modified traditional drumlines and catch alert drumlines. The KPMG report was fairly clear in identifying that the traditional drumlines are more effective at catching target sharks and the whole intent of the program at these selected beaches is to catch those target species and remove them so they do not pose a risk or danger to swimmers and beachgoers.

Mr SMITH: Can I just confirm, Director-General, that drumlines and nets are considered lethal control measures and are quoted as such within the KPMG report?

Mr Bolton: The traditional drumlines and nets are designed, operated, managed and maintained such that target sharks are euthanised and removed from the water in a humane way. With regard to catch alert drumlines which operate within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park area and under our Commonwealth permit, we are required to tag and release those target sharks.

Mr SMITH: Thank you, Director-General. Director-General, is it correct your department recommended these locations, and I mentioned the seven before? Is it correct that your department recommended these locations for the new drumlines and nets?

Mr Bolton: We made a range of recommendations, including looking at the history of the program. So up until this current review, the program has remained largely unchanged since 1962. During that period we have seen significant population growth up and down our coastline. We have seen more beaches become patrolled beaches by Surf Life Saving Queensland and we looked at this population growth, looked at some of the more popular beaches which currently do not have protection from the Shark Control Program and we made recommendations around those.

Mr SMITH: Just a clarifying question, if I may: Director-General, is it correct that your department recommended those new locations?

Mr Bolton: That is correct.

Mr SMITH: Thank you; I appreciate that. Director-General, is it correct that you provided advice to the minister on how many sharks will be culled each financial year until 2029 to ensure the Premier can meet his promise of making 'our oceans safer for Queenslanders for generations'?

Mr Bolton: I provided a range of advice to the minister, but certainly we did not include any modelling about any potential catch rates of the program or the expanded program out to 2029 and certainly we did not refer to or will we refer to the program as culling, which it is not.

Mr SMITH: Just a confirmation there again: so, Director-General, you just confirmed that your department did not provide modelling to the minister which shows the new drumlines and nets will make our oceans safer for Queenslanders for generations?

Mr Bolton: I would like to clarify: I thought the member asked did we provide modelling about the numbers of sharks that are likely to be culled until 2029. We did not provide that advice, but we did provide advice about how the strengthened program will improve beach safety and swimmer safety at these beaches where the Shark Control Program gear is located.

Mr SMITH: Director-General, did you provide modelling as to how many sharks would be caught on the new drumlines and nets?

Mr Bolton: Certainly as part of the assessment of the existing gear and the proposed new locations, we did undertake quite a bit of analysis of the effectiveness and efficacy of gear at certain types of beaches and locations and that informed our recommendations about what beaches should be expanded and the type of gear that ought to be placed at those beaches.

Mr SMITH: Minister, are you in the habit of installing lethal control measures without knowing where they should go and what they will do?

Dr ROWAN: Point of order.

Mr BENNETT: Point of order.

Mr SPEAKER: I am not surprised. Member for Moggill?

Dr ROWAN: My point of order is that there is a clear imputation or inference within the question and I just ask that that be rephrased.

Mr SPEAKER: I am going to ask you to rephrase that question, member for Bundaberg. There were imputations and it was borderline argumentative, so let us try again.

Mr SMITH: I appreciate your guidance. Minister, you have stated time and time again that 'the best science must inform our actions when it comes to fisheries'. Did Professor Colin Simpfendorfer not provide the best science to the working advisory body?

Mr PERRETT: Before I touch on this matter, I want to acknowledge the tragic loss late last year to the Walford and Zmuda families, who lost family members to shark attacks here in our waters. It was something that affected those communities of Rockhampton and the Bribie area. I certainly acknowledge that. I spoke with those families about those heartfelt matters that affected them. The primary purpose of the program that has operated in this state across multiple governments—particularly with the previous minister; this program has remained unaltered and unchanged for a long period of time—is to protect our way of life. Tragically, those families lost family members and I acknowledge that in sincerity here today.

The primary purpose of this program is to protect Queenslanders and our beaches. That is why it has enjoyed bipartisan support for a long period of time. We are committed to making certain that we continue to do that. Yes, there are always varying opinions. I note the member's interest in this area. I am sure he as a shadow minister, as I do as a minister, gets all sorts of opinions about fisheries matters, and in particular sharks. Of course we need to base decisions around science. We are committed in this program to understanding shark numbers here in this state. One of the key components is the research to understand in particular those seven target shark species so we can understand the potential impact or otherwise on shark numbers here in this state. Clearly, this program is about protecting Queenslanders, protecting our beaches and protecting our vital tourism industry.

I rely heavily on my department to inform me and provide me with information to maintain the importance of this program and, in particular, the way it has been done across governments since the early sixties. It is something that I do not take lightly. There are some new technologies that are emerging. I think the member for Bundaberg is aware of the drones and whale and dolphin deterrent technologies on nets that we are backing in. We will certainly continue to do that. There is always a variety of opinion around these sorts of things, and I am sure we all understand that—

Mr SMITH: Point of order, Speaker—

Mr PERRETT:—but we are committed to protecting Queensland swimmers.

Mr SPEAKER: I think the minister has completed his answer.

Mr SMITH: The point of order was on relevance, but I may just restate the question, if I may. Minister, you have stated time and time again that 'the best science must inform our actions when it comes to fisheries'. Did Professor Colin Simpfendorfer not provide the best science?

Mr PERRETT: He was one component of that committee. We respect his view. He made decisions in accordance with his view, and that is right and proper. Equally, the purpose of this program is to protect our beaches, Queenslanders and our swimmers. That is the very purpose of this.

Mr SMITH: Are you suggesting that the professor did not take that into mind?

Mr PERRETT: I am not certain what he took into mind.

Mr SMITH: If you are not certain then how do you know what science he provided?

Mr SPEAKER: We are not going to have any backwards and forwards. Keep this structured, thank you.

Mr SMITH: Apologies, Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: Have you completed your answer, Minister?

Mr PERRETT: As I have stated, he is entitled to his opinion. As the member would appreciate, we receive all sorts of opinion, including from my department. Clearly, there were recommendations made with respect to this matter. The primary purpose, and the view of the government, is that we are going to protect our beaches. If there is more that we can do, we are committed to that. We have

obviously sought that advice from the department. We will work with surf lifesavers, who are an important part of what we do. The work that they do with drones is critical and it enhances not only shark protection but, more importantly, swimmer safety across this state. We are committed to the research, we are committed to the best technologies and we will continue to back that in, and we have backed that with the commitment through the recent budget.

Mr SMITH: Speaker, one last one on this line of questioning? I did cede one question earlier.

Mr SPEAKER: We will give you one more.

Mr SMITH: I have always said you are my favourite Speaker this term! Director-General, did the department brief the minister on what evidence was provided by Professor Colin Simpfordorfer?

Mr Bolton: The minister was briefed on the advice of the scientific working group, which Dr Colin Simpfordorfer was a member of at that point in time and was previously. I am aware that Dr Simpfordorfer did resign from the committee in June of this year. As the minister outlined, the scientific working group is just one area that we seek scientific advice from. We have our own experts that we employ internally in the department that provide scientific advice. I also note that the scientific advice of KPMG—and the report is available on the department's website—was, and I quote—

Mr SMITH: Just on that, you have just said that the department did brief the minister on the professor; however, the minister has just said that he does not know what the professor submitted. Has the minister just misled the committee?

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Bundaberg, the director-general had not completed his answer. He does not need your interpretation of his answer.

Mr Bolton: Just to clarify for the member's benefit, my response was that we briefed the minister on the advice of the scientific working group that Dr Colin Simpfordorfer was a member of. We did not brief the minister on each individual member's scientific views or opinions. We represented the advice of the committee among a range of other advice that formed our recommendations to the minister about how the program can be strengthened.

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Mackay, we will go to you for the next question.

Mr DALTON: I refer to the SDS page 1, which refers to co-designing and co-delivering with primary industry stakeholders a 25-year blueprint for Queensland primary industries. Can the minister outline the importance of working with stakeholders in my electorate of Mackay to develop the blueprint?

Mr PERRETT: I know that the member has a strong interest in the development of the blueprint, which is important to his electorate of Mackay, a proud agricultural and fisheries community. It is essential that Primary Industries Prosper 2050 is practicable, deliverable and built on the collective knowledge of those who work, live and breathe primary industries. This is why co-designing, co-investing and co-delivering this strategy with industry is critical to its success.

The Crisafulli government embraces and values consultation and genuine listening, which is why the development of this blueprint has been the largest consultation with the primary industry sector by the Queensland government in more than a decade. For the past 10 years the former government simply did not listen to industry and most primary producers felt left in the wilderness. They were ignored, undervalued and underappreciated. For the past decade primary industries have been subjected to the illusion of consultation. It was lip-service, piecemeal and used as a distraction. In many cases, the period for providing feedback was minimal.

As I mentioned earlier, Primary Industries Prosper 2050 was initially developed with the input of an industry working group and also through a one-day forum held at the RNA, where 280 industry, government and other sector stakeholders gave their time, expertise and insights. Public consultation ran between 22 April and 9 June 2025, generating widespread participation from every Queensland region and every part of the primary industry sector.

In the member's region of Mackay, 29 people took time out of their busy schedules to attend the Primary Industries Prosper 2050 workshop on 16 May earlier this year. Attendees represented the cropping, horticulture, grazing and forestry sectors as well as representatives from local government, education, research, supply chain and the general community. In total, 3,243 people were engaged from primary producers, industry groups, R and D, education, the supply chain, biosecurity, investors, non-government organisations, community members and local, state and federal government representatives. It did not end there. The consultation also reached other groups such as environmental, research and development, education and investment interests as well as the broader community.

There were 24 engagement activities including 16 face-to-face workshops, three information hubs, large-scale events, five webinars for different stakeholder groups, in-person conferences and meetings with industry stakeholder groups and government agencies. DPI's online engagement hub received 8,260 visitors and 413 survey responses. More than one million people were reached through social media and traditional media, including through local outlets. Eighty written submissions were received and more than 714 ideas were generated.

People from every region participated. Of interest to the member for Mackay and the member for Mirani, four per cent of those who were engaged came from the greater Whitsunday and 13 per cent from the Central Queensland regions. Showing the breadth of those involved, approximately 22 per cent were from the Darling Downs and the south-west, 10 per cent from Far North Queensland, eight per cent from the greater north and north-west, 16 per cent from South-East Queensland, 14 per cent from the region of the member for Burnett, the member for Bundaberg and my region, and three per cent were from outside of Queensland. Well done to all those involved.

Dr ROWAN: My question relates to red imported fire ants. Minister, can you update the committee on how the Department of Primary Industries is delivering the National Fire Ant Eradication Program? I am specifically interested because it has been an issue in the electorate of Moggill.

Mr PERRETT: I am certainly aware of the member for Moggill's ongoing interest in this matter. We have discussed it many times. I thank him for his interest. I know the member has a strong interest in the eradication program and how Queensland is tackling this major biosecurity risk.

The red imported fire ant is one of the most significant invasive pests ever detected in Australia. Queensland continues to lead the nationally coordinated eradication effort. As members of the committee would be aware, the program is being delivered by Biosecurity Queensland under the guidance of the National Fire Ant Eradication Program. As the member will know, this program has had its fair share of challenges, particularly under 10 years of bad governance by the former government. The failures of the former government will not be turned around quickly, but work is underway.

Members may recall my commitment to ensuring the program is properly governed and recommendations from independent reviews implemented, which is something that the previous government refused to do. As the host jurisdiction, Queensland is responsible for on-ground operations. The program is jointly funded by all Australian governments. In this year's 2025-26 Queensland budget, we reaffirmed our commitment to the current nationally agreed eradication plan, providing our state's share of funding. The program continues to focus on eradication and priority zones while also investing heavily in suppression to reduce fire ant population densities where they are established. This dual approach of eradication supported by suppression is essential to increasing the program's momentum, which is something I am incredibly passionate about.

Eradication treatments are underway in the Lockyer Valley, the Scenic Rim and southern parts of the Somerset region. These areas are identified as the highest priority for full removal and treatment is being applied at the required intensity and frequency to meet national protocol standards. Targeted surveillance, compliance, monitoring and movement controls are all part of the strategy to limit spread during treatment phases. The eradication program conducts targeted compliance activities. This includes auditing high-risk businesses such as landscape suppliers and construction contractors to ensure they are complying with movement restrictions under the Biosecurity Regulation. We are leading the eradication program with the good governance it deserves while also building community and industry capability. We are focusing on compliance efforts on the highest risk areas. Mr Reece Pianta, of the Invasive species Council, welcomes our commitment, saying that the eradication efforts are working.

Beyond eradication, suppression activities are now being delivered more intensively across the broader infestation area thanks to funding, delivered by the Crisafulli government, of an additional \$24 million over the next two years. Queensland is doing this in addition to the eradication efforts because we want to get on top of the issue. The state budget includes specific funding for these suppression activities, which are being delivered by the Fire Ant Suppression Taskforce. FAST is a dedicated unit within Biosecurity Queensland that works alongside the core eradication team but focuses on a fast-response aerial treatment. Their efforts help maintain containment across the broader fire ant biosecurity zones and allow eradication teams to stay focused on the planned removal areas.

Within the suppression zone many industries that are adjacent to traditional primary industries such as landscaping, turf supplies and nurseries are seeing their businesses under additional financial and commercial pressure to ensure compliance. They have welcomed our increased focus. Mr Colin Fruk, the CEO of Greenlife Industry, has said that the government is 'backing in a strong biosecurity

plan and strengthening the systems that protect our nursery and horticultural industries'. He said that fire ants pose a major risk and that finally we have a government that takes seriously the risk of their spread.

Community engagement remains central to the program's success. Public reporting rates have increased, which is a positive sign that Queenslanders are aware of the risk and understand their role in containment. This increased vigilance has led to faster treatment responses and more accurate mapping of the infestation. The previous government failed to act early and did not properly fund suppression in the earlier years of the program. The community is paying the price for that mismanagement and indifference. It allowed the infestation to spread more widely, making the current effort far more complex and expensive. In contrast, the Crisafulli government is taking the eradication task seriously. We are providing both the funding and the operational backing that is needed to support our role in this national effort.

Mr BENNETT: Further on that subject, as I understand it, the work of the Fire Ant Suppression Taskforce is in addition to the eradication program. Minister, can you provide advice on how this is delivering fast aerial suppression activities to significantly reduce the risk of fire ant densities?

Mr PERRETT: I know the member has a strong interest in tackling fire ants. I am certainly aware of that. He is correct that the Fire Ant Suppression Taskforce or FAST program is in addition to the National Fire Ant Eradication Program. FAST operates alongside the eradication program but with a distinct and complementary focus. The eradication program treats and checks every property to eliminate every fire ant in the eradication area. FAST works in an area of approximately 650,000 hectares inside the eradication area or the suppression area to keep fire ant numbers down, helping reduce the risk of further spread.

FAST provides free treatment product, equipment, training and advice to enable community members, large landholders, councils and government agencies to self-manage fire ants on land they own or manage. The Crisafulli government supercharged FAST as part of the broader response to the growing complexity of the fire ant challenge. This was welcomed by the Invasive Species Council. Mr Reece Pianta said—

This is important leadership and action from Premier Crisafulli and Agricultural Minister Perrett ... They have understood that current levels of suppression funding have been woefully inadequate ... and shows the new Queensland government is listening and has clearly prioritised the fire ant threat.

I welcome Mr Pianta's comments around that. He has been a great advocate with respect to the increased work, particularly around fire ant suppression.

We recognise suppression ahead of eradication efforts is essential to keeping fire ant population levels low and stopping the pests from spreading further. That recognition is backed up by science and endorsed by the National Management Group. In this year's budget, we have provided dedicated funding of an additional \$24 million over two years for this program for the aerial treatment of approximately 106,000 hectares of known high fire ant densities in the suppression area. The Crisafulli government is serious about tackling fire ants in the suppression area. We understand that one round of treatment will have a limited impact on fire ant densities, so we have provided FAST with enough funding to aerially treat those targeted areas twice. This is the first time suppression has been properly resourced.

FAST activities are focused on protecting our economy, environment and way of life through a multipronged approach. For example, FAST supports primary producers, including canegrowers and turf producers, to destroy the fire ant nests they can see and the ones they cannot. As well as protecting their farm and family, this will help reduce the risk of human assisted movement when selling turf, mulch or hay, for example.

FAST also provides councils and state and federal government agencies with free treatment products, training and equipment to treat roadsides, rail lines, footpaths, along transport corridors and around housing developments. Waste facilities, where ground treatment can be difficult to undertake, and common areas where illegal dumping may occur are potential sources of human assisted movement of fire ants and may also be eligible for aerial suppression treatment.

FAST provides free fast-acting treatment products and equipment for both broadscale ground treatment of large land areas and spot treatment of fire ant nests. They also train pest management technicians with specially equipped vehicles for rapid deployment where there is a high risk to public safety—for example, in aged-care facilities or in childcare centres.

FAST is delivering the missing link between eradication and long-term control. It is focused, properly resourced and backed by operational planning that reflects the current scale of the risk. I cannot overstate the importance of working on suppression to stop the spread. It makes common sense. Last August a federal Senate inquiry report recommended that—

... the Australian Government work with the Queensland Government to urgently review the funding and outcomes of the Fire Ant Suppression Taskforce (FAST), with a particular focus on increasing FAST activities in areas not receiving any eradication or suppression activity.

And—

... to commit to additional funding ...

I urge the federal government to match our funding commitment to the FAST program. I have written to the federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Julie Collins, and I am disappointed no support has been forthcoming. I have also written to the federal Treasurer, Jim Chalmers. Disappointingly, I have not even had the courtesy of a response. I have talked to the mayor of Logan, Jon Raven, and he has certainly raised it with me as part of the South-East Queensland Council of Mayors. I have taken the liberty to write to the federal Treasurer, because I know his area is heavily impacted by fire ants. With that, any assistance that members of the opposition could provide to work with us and their federal Labor colleagues to back this vital suppression funding would be welcome.

Mr SPEAKER: We will have one more question before we change over. Member for Moggill?

Dr ROWAN: Minister, under the previous Labor government, fire ant treatment was only conducted in the warmer months. Can you outline the importance of considering Queensland's weather when conducting treatment in relation to the movement of fire ants?

Mr PERRETT: I know the member for Moggill confronts this in his electorate, as many members across South-East Queensland do. He has a strong interest in eradication efforts, which are important, across the south-east and particularly in his electorate of Moggill. I made a commitment that this program would be properly governed under the LNP and that we would listen to expert science advice, including implementing the recommendations of key reviews that had been ignored.

One of the key operational improvements made in the first seven months of the Crisafulli government is the shift to year-round fire ant treatment by introducing winter treatment activities. This change is based on scientific research about fire ant behaviour and Queensland's variable climate. There is a deliberate departure from the previous government's piecemeal approach, which limited treatment to the warmer months and failed to adapt to emerging scientific advice and seasonal risks.

The importance of winter treatment cannot be overstated. Fire ants remain active throughout much of the year in Queensland, particularly in coastal and subtropical regions where soil temperatures stay high enough to support foraging. Moreover, recent studies by Biosecurity Queensland and the national partners have shown that treatment applied during the winter months is effective, and continuing treatment throughout the year will support ongoing adaptive management strategies that will enable us to achieve the eradication goal.

Crucially, the Crisafulli government has acted on updated advice regarding the behaviour of fire ants during heavy rainfall and flooding. In such conditions, fire ants exhibit rafting—a survival mechanism where colonies form floating masses and relocate with floodwaters. Following the 2022 floods, I remember asking the former minister about this in a question on notice in the parliament. It was raised again during estimates in 2022. Residents were reporting seeing them rafting. It was reported in the local media and in social media posts. Logan's former mayor revealed to a Senate inquiry that council officers watched them. He said, 'They were floating. The officers could see them floating.' The reports were dismissed and, of course, the former minister saw nothing urgent about dealing with the spread.

Under the previous government, treatment programs did not account for these risks. Eradication treatment was typically paused during cooler months and no well-funded suppression capability was in place to intervene with fire ants, which were most mobile during those flooding times. As a result, key opportunities to contain the pests were missed, particularly following major rainfall events in South-East Queensland between 2017 and 2022. The Crisafulli government has changed that. The Fire Ant Suppression Taskforce now leads a dedicated suppression effort, including aerial baiting and winter treatments across the high-risk buffer zones.

In 2025-26 we have provided funding to the FAST program to support this year-round activity, ensuring suppression is continuous and responsive to conditions on the ground. The program now uses

soil temperature data, rainfall tracking and ant behaviour modelling so we can time baiting efforts more effectively. This scientific and seasonally adaptive approach is now embedded in the National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program's operational plan.

Queensland's leadership in adopting winter suppression has been noted by the national program's steering committee and is informing best practice guidelines for other jurisdictions. The previous government treated fire ants like a seasonal problem; we treat them like a year-round threat. Our investment in winter suppression, aerial capability and weather responsive planning ensures Queensland is giving the issue the seriousness it demands in correcting years of delay and inaction.

On the tail end of that, I acknowledge the work that our scientists have done. It is world leading. It is great work. I have been in Berrinba and talked to the scientists. They need to be commended, because what we are now doing in this state reflects the conditions in this state. It will certainly enhance our ability to deal with this ongoing challenge.

Mr SPEAKER: I will go to non-government members. Member for Traeger, do you have a question?

Mr KATTER: My first question, Minister, may be better answered by the director-general. Can you confirm if the cattle numbers in Cape York have decreased in the last, say, 10 years?

Mr Bolton: I did not quite hear the last part of that question.

Mr KATTER: I am talking about the cattle numbers in Cape York. Would the department be aware of a decrease in their numbers over the last 10 years?

Mr Bolton: The number of cattle on the cape is not something that I believe we actively track. If it is okay with the minister, I would like to see if I can give you a more definitive answer around that and also whether or not we have observed any decrease in numbers over the last 10 years.

Mr KATTER: Perhaps I could go straight to it, Minister: in pursuing the goal of a \$30 billion industry, will the minister be pushing for greater cattle numbers in Cape York?

Mr PERRETT: I thank the member for Traeger for his interest in the importance of the beef industry to not only his electorate but also the northern part of the state. As we know, the beef industry is one of the key economic drivers within our regional and rural communities. The industry's value to the state not only domestically but also internationally through our export markets is critical to the future growth of primary industries.

We understand that in the cape particularly there is some opportunity linked to increased production across primary industries not just in terms of cattle herds and beef numbers but generally. I think there are some untapped areas there where there is the opportunity to enhance our role. I take seriously the commitment of \$30 billion by 2030. The beef and livestock industry will play an important part in that as we move to achieving that goal over the next few years.

Mr KATTER: There has been a lot of land in the cape and some in the gulf that has been taken out of production for pastoral activities for all sorts of other uses, mostly national parks. Would the minister commit to no more of these large pastoral leases being converted to national parks, particularly in the northern region and the gulf and cape?

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, it is not really within your portfolio, but I will allow you to answer it as you will.

Mr KATTER: I appreciate that that is a pretty difficult question to answer. Perhaps it might be better framed by asking: would the minister oppose moves for more national parks in those areas?

Mr SPEAKER: As I said, member for Traeger, I know the agriculture policy area does rove across a number of portfolio areas. I will let the minister answer as he will.

Mr PERRETT: There are important questions around land use planning. That is an important part of what we do in this state. The issue the member raises probably is more within the Minister for the Environment's portfolio, but he is certainly aware of our approach to grow the value of primary industry production in this state to \$30 billion by 2030. I am always pleased to commit to preserving good quality prime agricultural land for the future. There are all sorts of land use planning pressures that come into that. We are seeing those across other commodities here in this state.

The Indigenous communities in those areas have a long history and a key role to play in the pastoral industry. I know the member for Traeger is aware of that. I am certainly aware of that. We will take any opportunity we get to work with the Indigenous communities in that area, particularly around

the traditional area of beef and cattle production. I know they have a natural interest in that. They are great land managers in those areas. They understand the importance of growing economic opportunity.

To answer the member's question, these communities do need opportunity. I think we can offer that through primary industries, particularly given our goal of \$30 billion in production by 2030. I think the cape and those communities can play their role. We can also assist them with an area that they have a natural interest in.

Mr SPEAKER: Did you have another question, member for Traeger?

Mr KATTER: Yes, Mr Speaker. Pivoting off the issue of the drive towards \$30 billion in production is the 3.8 million megalitres of water. Bearing in mind that this is a water issue, I want to see how you play a part in terms of advocacy in unlocking that 3.8 million megalitres of water that runs down the Flinders every year. To put context around that, Andrew Pauli is somewhat of a pioneer in the mid-west area. He has 4,000 hectares of share farms and 10,000 megalitres of that 3.8 million megalitres would transform his operations.

Mr SPEAKER: In the interests of time, would you come to a question, please, member for Traeger.

Mr KATTER: What can you do to help the likes of Andrew Pauli establish and pioneer farming off the Flinders in the mid-west plains?

Mr PERRETT: The point is well made in respect of the opportunity in the cape and the northern part of this state. Water is an abundant resource in some of those areas. There is certainly a review that Minister Leahy is undertaking. We committed to review all 23 water plans in this state to make certain that we can benefit agriculture production, which is critical. We know where there is water security. We know that in the regions where we have good soil types we have water security and we get investment. That is important, particularly in those more regional and remote areas.

If we can build economies around that then that absolutely dovetails into the broader plan around primary industries. Working with those communities and the Indigenous communities in those areas to gain opportunities from the resources there is extremely important. I do not underestimate the opportunity that is there, member for Traeger. They are certainly there.

Those issues have been raised. They may sit within other portfolios, but with a whole-of-government approach—and particularly given the drive for \$30 billion in production by 2030—water security is key to it and working to enhance that is critical. For the member's benefit, we have proudly established the Agriculture Energy Water Council where we bring together key industry organisations to discuss these matters and link opportunities. That council will be essential to driving the change that you are talking about where you can link industry understanding and individuals' understanding of the opportunities. Obviously, the other issue is water and that is a critical component of it.

That council will have an important role in assisting me as the minister and assisting the government to make certain that we look for those opportunities. As the member for Traeger is certainly aware and I am certainly aware, there is some immediate investment that is sitting there waiting for some opportunity. It is significant investment. In a lot of cases there may be a certain amount of risk, but those people in that area are prepared to put these proposals forward and we have a mechanism to be able to consider them.

Mr MARTIN: Minister, following up on a question that you responded to earlier about Spanish mackerel, I note that earlier you said that you were aiming for a 48 per cent biomass for Spanish mackerel. However, there is a bit of inconsistency. The Minister for the Environment said that the government was fully committed to the UNESCO commitment made in May 2023. That commitment is for 60 per cent biomass. There is a bit of inconsistency. What is the answer? Is there a new commitment for 48 per cent? Are we not going to honour our UNESCO commitments to the Great Barrier Reef or is the Minister for the Environment—

Mr SPEAKER: That is a long question, member for Stretton.

Mr MARTIN: The point is clear, though; it is 48 per cent or 60 per cent.

Mr SPEAKER: I am not arguing about the question; it is just the length of it.

Mr BENNETT: Mr Speaker, point of order: is there authentication of where the other minister has made the UNESCO claim? I wonder where that came from.

Mr MARTIN: Through estimates and it is in *Hansard*. That is my understanding.

Mr BENNETT: I did not hear it either, but that is fine.

Mr PERRETT: I understand he is seeking clarification around that issue. We are absolutely committed to our obligations and there is no issue there. I will hand to the director-general to provide clarity around the recommended change in that area.

Mr Bolton: I thank the member for the question. It is a really good question. The broad policy that underpins our harvest strategies is not changing. That talks about a base or generic stock biomass of 60 per cent. That applies a blanket approach to every single stock that we manage. For some stocks like coral trout that is absolutely appropriate where they are slower growing compared to, say, Spanish mackerel, scallops and prawns. For those really fast growing, fast breeding stocks—like I mentioned, Spanish mackerel, scallops and prawns—60 per cent is not necessarily appropriate.

As part of the revised science and revised stock assessment, the independent experts that the minister mentioned provided advice around what might be a more appropriate biomass to be aiming for. We took that to our independent fisheries scientific working group. They also confirmed that 60 per cent was overly conservative and that a range between 40 and 60 per cent would be more appropriate. It was recommended and endorsed by the scientific working group that 48 per cent, being similar to other Commonwealth fisheries that manage Spanish mackerel, would be appropriate for this particular species which is the recommendation made to the minister that we should amend the harvest strategy for Spanish mackerel only, not the broader harvest strategy policy, to set that target at 48 per cent.

Mr MARTIN: Does that put us in breach of our UNESCO agreement?

Mr Bolton: To the best of my knowledge, it does not.

Mr MARTIN: Could someone in the department have a look and come back to us just to confirm that is the case?

Mr Bolton: I am more than happy to come back to you before the end of the session.

Mr MARTIN: Director-General, on the reference group that you mentioned, were there any recreational fishers represented?

Mr Bolton: I thank the member for the question. It is a really good question to ask. As the minister has already outlined, this government is committed to backing the best science but also consultation. As part of looking at the new stock assessment, the working group was comprised of independent experts but also members of the commercial and recreational fishing group. With the results of the stock assessment being at 34 per cent, we took that to the Spanish mackerel working group, the reef line working group and the scientific expert panel to get their advice as well. Both the reef line working group and the Spanish mackerel working group have commercial and recreational fishers on those.

Mr SMITH: Would the director-general be able to provide the committee with the timeline of those changes and also those meetings with those reference groups? I am happy for the minister to take that on notice.

Mr Bolton: The communiques for those meetings are available on the department's website. My understanding is that they are up to date. If the member was inclined, he could certainly search the department's website for that.

Mr SMITH: I believe that the member for Traeger has some questions.

Mr KATTER: Minister, what is your department doing to address Integrity Systems determining that farmers who will be surrounded by incoming net zero projects could soon be deemed contaminated following a change to their livestock accreditation that requires landowners to confirm whether their animals are grazing near solar panels and wind turbines?

Mr PERRETT: Risks around contamination are taken seriously by industry and by government. I am unaware—and I am happy to be corrected by the member—

Mr SPEAKER: Member for Traeger, do you have anything that you can present to the committee that would authenticate that?

Mr KATTER: No, not on me. I had an article sent to me today that I was referring to but I do not have that on me. I can change my question if that helps.

Mr SPEAKER: Yes, have another go.

Mr KATTER: Is the minister aware of any threats regarding the same issue with net zero projects being associated with livestock operations?

Mr PERRETT: As I indicated before, any risk of contamination is something that property owners take seriously. I certainly take that seriously with our operation, making certain that everything is in order. I am not aware of anything that has been brought to my attention specifically with respect to that. Equally, I do not dismiss the issue. Protecting our industry is critical, particularly our export markets. If there is any issue or suggestion around a matter specifically, I am happy to commit, particularly through the department, to investigate that and deal with it, because we do not need a situation where there is an unintended consequence from potential contamination. That is across all industry. It is not just in dealing with those sorts of projects but generally where you have run-off and those sorts of issues. We certainly do take that seriously. If there is a specific matter on a specific property where there has been an issue, I am happy to commit to the member to investigate that.

Mr SPEAKER: The committee will now adjourn for a break. The hearing will resume at 4 pm with the continued examination of estimates for the portfolio area of primary industries.

Proceedings suspended from 3.45 pm to 4.00 pm.



Mr SPEAKER: Welcome back, Minister and officials. The committee will now resume its examination of the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of primary industries. We will go to government members. I think the member for Mackay has the first question.

Mr DALTON: My question is to the minister. How will the revocation of investment warnings in the commercial fishing sector help support confidence and long-term growth in the industry?

Mr PERRETT: I know the member has a strong interest in the viability of the commercial fishing industry to provide the fresh seafood which Queenslanders enjoy.

The decision in June of the Crisafulli government to revoke investment warnings over commercial fisheries is a critical step in restoring confidence, certainty and long-term growth across Queensland's commercial fishing sector. This represents a fundamental shift to an approach based on science, consultation and fairness. The decision will help grow the industry, which generates about \$354 million a year. The warnings created uncertainty for fishers, undermined access to finance and suppressed business investment in vessels, gear and quota. In many cases fishers were left with no clear pathway forward and no time line for resolution. Bank finance was harder to secure, vessel upgrades were deferred, young operators hesitated to enter the industry, and in many cases family businesses walked away altogether.

The Crisafulli government has acted to stabilise the regulatory environment. We formally revoked investment warnings in the commercial line, net and crab fisheries. This was done following departmental advice, advice from industry stakeholders, and in the context of our commitment to transparent, evidence-based policymaking. Removing these warnings means that fishers can now invest in their businesses with confidence that their access rights are no longer flagged for future structural adjustment or potential loss. This stability is essential not only for individual licence holders but also for the broader supply chain, including processors, exporters and regional communities that rely on commercial fishing as a core economic activity.

The Queensland Seafood Industry Association's executive officer David Bobbermen told the ABC he was ecstatic and that it would give the industry a renewed purpose. He said—

This is lifting the shackles off the wild-caught seafood industry fishery ... will encourage young people to enter the fishery and do so with confidence.

The Australian Marine Conservation Society's Great Barrier Reef campaign manager Simon Miller said he 'hoped the change would mean more innovation and modernisation in the industry to improve sustainable fishing practices'. Revoking the warnings is part of a broader reset. This government is working with the commercial fishing industry on a new pathway that respects access rights, supports sustainable harvest and promotes clear rules without overreach. This year's state budget supports that work.

We have provided funding for better fisheries, data collection and compliance system investments that will underpin more accurate stock assessments and avoid the data gaps that plagued past decisions. We are also working to remove red tape and improving the consultation process to ensure policy changes are based on genuine engagement and timely information. This stands in stark contrast to the previous top-down reactive approach, which frequently lacked transparency.

Importantly, we are committed to sustainable fisheries, but we believe sustainability must be balanced with viability. We are restoring a cooperative model that gives certainty to those who harvest responsibly. Revoking the investment warning is more than a regulatory fix; it is a signal to

Queensland's commercial fishers that the Crisafulli government backs them, values their role in the economy and is serious about rebuilding trust and investment in the industry.

Mr BENNETT: Would the minister outline the work the department has been doing to help secure the future of Mossman's sugarcane farming families, including supporting the delivery of this year's sugarcane crop?

Mr PERRETT: I know the member has a strong interest in this issue, and in particular the future of a healthy and strong sugarcane industry. When we came into government we reaffirmed our commitment to work with all stakeholders to find a sustainable solution regarding the Mossman mill, which included a \$12.5 million investment over three years in the Mossman region. In this year's budget \$6 million will support local canegrowers in the Mossman community to transport their cane to the Mulgrave mill for the 2025 season while the future of the Mossman sugar mill and cane growing in the region is determined.

The Crisafulli government knows exactly how crucial the sugar industry is to our state's prosperity. For generations the sugar industry has been one of the iconic symbols of Queensland's primary production. It is in Queensland's DNA. Over the last year Queensland's sugarcane industry produced more than 27 million tonnes of sugar cane from 330,000 hectares of prime agricultural land with a crop value of \$2.06 billion. Many of Queensland's rural and regional communities have been built off the back of sugar. I am proud that we are supporting the Mossman community and the future of this important industry. I have personally visited Mossman on several occasions and spoken with local canegrowers and their families. I was there again just three weeks ago. The Premier has also visited on multiple occasions, most recently speaking at a meeting of canegrowers and industry representatives in Mossman, where he encouraged them to continue growing cane while solutions for the Mossman community are found.

The Crisafulli government also formed the Mossman Advisory Committee, which is chaired by the member for Cook. It includes members from the Douglas Shire Council, local canegrower organisations and the Department of Primary Industries. The committee is currently securing the 2025 harvest and exploring sustainable, long-term options for growers and the community. The government is also partnering with Queensland canegrowers through a \$500,000 funding injection to develop a Far North Queensland Cane Expansion Plan to boost productivity and grower profitability. Commencing this financial year, the plan will aim to support industry development, expansion and long-term viability of the region's cane industry. My department has also supported funding for a rural financial counsellor based in Cairns to provide growers with agronomic advice and trials of potential alternative crops.

Mr G KELLY: Minister, moving to one of the closest things to my heart: funding for Beef Week. As I understand it, there is \$4.5 million for Beef Week 2027 in this budget. Minister, can you outline how much economic activity the event generates for the greater Rockhampton region and Queensland overall? Does our \$4.5 million commitment represent a good return on our investment?

Mr PERRETT: I know the member is passionate about the promotion of the beef industry and Beef Week. I certainly am too; I have my Beef 27 tie on today in recognition of the importance of that particular event. As I said, it is very close to my heart. I have attended every Beef Week since 1991. As a grazier, I am immensely proud that it has grown into a major event on the calendar.

The member is correct in noting that the Crisafulli government has committed \$4.5 million in funding over two years to provide a bigger and better Beef 2027. Beef Week regularly attracts well over 100,000 attendees, with almost 120,000 attending last year. It was a drawcard for 35 countries and more than 600 international delegates. Sixty per cent of the viewers of the newly launched Beef TV tuned in from overseas, with the biggest audiences coming from Indonesia, the Philippines and Venezuela. An independent report commissioned by Beef Australia found that Beef Week 2024 set a new economic impact record, generating \$102 million in direct and incremental expenditure for the Rockhampton region and creating 721 full-time job equivalents. This impact expanded to an additional \$69.9 million for other parts of Queensland.

I am proud that the Crisafulli government is providing this funding support because the Queensland beef industry is the largest primary production sector, supporting over 20,000 rural and regional businesses. Queensland holds approximately 48 per cent of Australia's cattle herd, which is around 13.5 million beef cattle. Beef is Queensland's highest value agricultural sector, generating an estimated \$8.63 billion in gross value of production—\$6.07 billion from disposals and \$2.56 billion from processing—in the 2023-24 year. We have the largest feedlot sector in Australia, accounting for approximately 57 per cent of the national feedlot capacity. Whether they are beef producers, transport operators or supply chain occupations—such as butchers, smallgoods makers, meat inspectors, quality

assurance officers, boners, slicers, slaughterers, process workers, meat packers, product graders or exporters—the beef industry is big business in Queensland.

I have often spoken about the need to promote our primary industries to schoolchildren, and Beef Week is pulling its weight in demonstrating the depth of our beef industry. Last year more than 3,800 students participated in the school program and another 1,200 visited the event. Beef Week's success is due to the efforts of the organisers, workers, farmers, graziers and exhibitors and the industries and businesses that support them, the attendance of rural and regional people, the Queensland and interstate schoolchildren who enter competitions, and the city of Rockhampton.

Dr ROWAN: Minister, how is the Crisafulli LNP state government directly supporting the agricultural sector to fund grassroots farming and agricultural innovation?

Mr PERRETT: I thank the member for Moggill for the question; he has a strong interest in supporting the agricultural sector to fund grassroots farming innovation. Accelerated innovation, readiness and adoption of ag tech in grassroots farming is a key priority for the Department of Primary Industries. Embracing innovation, technology and disruptive science is pivotal to reaching our target to grow the production output of primary industries to \$30 billion by 2030. The Crisafulli government is driving innovation through the brand new \$30 million Sowing the Seeds of Farming Innovation Fund.

Our investment will back Queensland-first projects and promote new technologies and techniques to futureproof the industry. Importantly, it will support next generation farmers and boost ag tech adoption. We want primary producers to get better productivity using the best and most up-to-date technology and innovation. Queensland is rapidly being established as a hub for innovators who develop cutting-edge technology. Our farmers are already exploring ag tech options to improve productivity, whether it is savings on inputs, growing better crops or producing better genetics. My department collaborates closely with the producers to ensure they have access to fit-for-purpose technologies, rigorously testing them in real-world farming and production environments to drive and support industry adoption.

Our Sowing the Seeds of Farming Innovation Fund is the first agriculture innovation fund in this state. It will back cutting-edge technologies and innovations that improve on-farm practices that cultivate long-term productivity, profitability and sustainability in primary industries. The fund will be open in the next few months, with investments targeted towards high-potential projects aligned with Queensland's innovation priorities. It will no doubt attract interest from the ag tech innovators around the state, including those in research and industry development. We are currently finalising details and I look forward to announcing the first Sowing the Seeds of Farming Innovation Fund towards the end of this year.

Mr SPEAKER: I go to the member for Woodridge for the next question.

Mr DICK: Director-General, in relation to the support the Department of Primary Industries has provided to assist Queenslanders in Kingaroy and in Tolga on the Atherton Tablelands impacted by the decision of the Bega Group to close its subsidiary company, the Peanut Company of Australia, in the State Development, Infrastructure and Works Committee budget estimates hearing held on 30 July the Deputy Premier made the following statement. He said—

I understand both the Department of Primary Industries and my department have been engaging with representatives of workers from the company.

Director-General, have officers of your department been engaging with representatives of workers of the Peanut Company of Australia either in Kingaroy or Tolga or in both communities, as stated by the Deputy Premier?

Mr Bolton: Yes, I can confirm that, following a 12-month strategic review, the Bega Group announced on 9 July they were looking at a staged closure of the peanut processing factory. My staff have been engaging with the Peanut Company of Australia, in particular, on two occasions to discuss the closure—being on 18 and 31 July. My staff also attended grower meetings in Kingaroy on 15 July and in Bundaberg on 16 July. We are working with them about what support they might need, particularly with the growers, around if the company is sold and no buyer continues that operation and where those growers might be transitioning to in terms of alternative cropping.

Mr DICK: I understand the work you will be doing with growers, Director-General. I want to ask questions about the meetings on 9 and 18 July. They are the two meetings you had with representatives of workers. In which communities were those meetings held? Were they held in Kingaroy, Tolga or both?

Mr Bolton: In terms of the meetings that happened on 18 and 31 July, I will have to get back to you to give you the exact location, but my understanding is that it was Kingaroy. There were further grower meetings in Kingaroy on 15 July and in Bundaberg on 16 July.

Mr DICK: Just to be clear, Director-General, were those meetings with representatives of workers or were they meetings of growers? I could understand how you might be involved with meetings of growers.

Mr Bolton: Thank you for the clarification. The meetings of 18 and 31 July were with representatives of the Peanut Company of Australia. The meetings of 15 and 16 July were meetings with growers.

Mr DICK: Thank you. I appreciate you clarifying that. So the first two meetings were with representatives of the company, as distinct from representatives of workers. You did not meet with trade unions, for example, representing the workers.

Mr Bolton: I do not have the details in terms of whether they were part of the union. All I have at this time are details that we met with representatives of the company on those two dates.

Mr DICK: I appreciate that. At those meetings with the company, were any representatives of the department of state development there meeting with your officers in a cross-agency approach?

Mr Bolton: Unfortunately, I do not have those details. If it pleases the minister, I will see if I can get those details before the end of the session.

Mr PERRETT: Yes.

Mr DICK: That would be appreciated. Director-General, do you have any understanding of what the outcome of those meetings with the company was—whether anything was agreed and whether any action was taken?

Mr Bolton: My understanding is that the Bega Group remains open to potential buyers, so at this time we do not have any specific actions in terms of moving forward. I have been advised that no formal offers have been provided to date for the Kingaroy facility, but we will continue to work with representatives of the company and the growers once a decision is made.

Mr DICK: I appreciate your answers. Director-General, as an experienced senior public servant, I think you understand how the Worker Transition Scheme works, which is to help workers impacted by redundancy. Are you aware that your department or department officers have been activated to work within the worker transition and rapid response program?

Mr Bolton: I do note that that question was posed to the Deputy Premier. I do also note that that particular program is under his remit and it would be better asked towards the Deputy Premier.

Mr DICK: Thank you, Director-General. I think I might leave you to come back to the committee, if you could, with the support of the minister, with any further information this afternoon just to clarify some of those matters.

Mr PERRETT: Yes.

Mr DICK: It seems clear to me what your agency has done but I will leave it there. Thank you, Director-General, for your direct answers.

Mr SMITH: Director-General, is it correct that your office and the office of the ministers have been sent complaints made to the department by recreational fishers regarding the use of gillnets in South-East Queensland?

Mr Bolton: I am not aware of any formal issues that have been raised directly, but there may well be because sometimes those matters take a little while to get through the system. I am aware there are concerns within the community about gillnet fishing within South-East Queensland rivers.

Mr SMITH: Speaker, the member for Stretton will table a series of correspondence from recreational fishers to the minister. Once, Speaker, you are satisfied, I will then ask a question of the minister.

Mr SPEAKER: If we could distribute copies, please.

Mr SMITH: Minister, recreational fishers inform the opposition that your office has not responded to alleged illegal gillnet fishing in the Logan and Albert rivers. Can you confirm this?

Mr PERRETT: I thank the member for his interest and the correspondence he has tabled here. I am aware of those matters that have been raised. I will go to the director-general for some further clarity on this, but my understanding is there was some regulatory change that was made under the previous

government that may have created this issue. However, I will defer to the director-general because we absolutely need clarity around these matters.

Mr Bolton: Historically, barramundi was only permitted to be taken under the N2 fishery within Queensland, which was a prescribed fishery north of Tin Can Bay, and in the L1 fishery south of Tin Can Bay or south of Bundaberg. Netting in the Logan River, historically, was authorised under the N1 fishery. When the N1 and N2 fishery was repealed on 1 January 2024 by the former government, a new N15 fishery was established and it did not exclude barramundi, so barramundi is now able to be taken within east coast Queensland. Although there has been a change related to this new species, there is no overt compliance activity or concerns that we are aware of. The Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol is responding on a regular occasion to the Logan and Albert rivers and other parts of Jacobs Well and undertaking spot checks of commercial fishers, along with their commercial premises to ensure compliance with the current catch and commercial requirements.

Mr SMITH: Director-General, following up on your statement there, are you aware of any images and videos provided to the department that captures alleged illegal gillnet fishing in South-East Queensland?

Mr Bolton: I am aware of videos and photos circulating on social media. I have not seen anything that has been passed through to me formally through the department, but I am aware of such videos. I can confirm that QBFP are actively investigating any and all alleged unlawful activity and will take compliance action if required.

Mr SMITH: Speaker, I would like to table a series of images that have been provided by recreational fishers. Within these images—and, of course, I will await your guidance on a question—it is alleged that there is illegal gillnet fishing, net stretching 800 metres across the river and, in fact, even catching a recreational vessel, but I will wait for the tabled documents to be shown to you.

Mr SPEAKER: Are you seeking leave to table?

Mr SMITH: I do not need to seek leave. I am a member of the committee.

Mr SPEAKER: The member for Stretton is tabling. There are copies for the director-general and the committee.

Mr SMITH: Minister, recreational fishers have told the opposition these images were taken of alleged illegal fishing in the Logan and Albert rivers, including gillnets stretched across 800 metres of the river, capturing bycatch species and even recreational vessels. Minister, will you take action to support the recreational fishers who have contacted your office and the department?

Mr PERRETT: I thank the member for raising these important issues. Of course, any illegal activity will be called out, absolutely; there is no ambiguity about that. That is why I mentioned before we are trying to establish from the N1 to the N15 what is actually legally permissible and whether there are some adjustments that may need to be made based on perhaps—and I say perhaps—some unintended consequences that resulted from that particular change back in early 2024. Of course, any illegal activity is completely unacceptable and needs to be investigated and dealt with appropriately.

Mr SMITH: Minister, have you or your office been provided with images of gillnet fishing in the Logan and Albert rivers by recreational fishers before today?

Mr PERRETT: I will have to check that and get back to you before the end of the session, member. I certainly take these matters seriously. That is why I am seeking clarification about the N1 to N15 and to see whether this activity is illegal. I am not suggesting anything otherwise; it was just brought to my attention that there may have been an unintended consequence with respect to some changes made by the previous government in early 2024, but that advice is still pending.

Mr SMITH: Minister, as you are going to take that and see if you can come back with that information before the end of the session, could you please also confirm that your office has indeed responded to those particular documents of correspondence that have been tabled to you today?

Mr PERRETT: Of course we will clarify these matters, but more importantly we will be seeking clarification from the department about the legality or otherwise. That is obviously something I am keen to establish. Director-General, do you have anything further to say about that?

Mr Bolton: I am aware of some of these allegations, not that they have been raised with me in a formal way, but certainly informally. I am also very much aware that the QBFP is investigating these matters. As the minister said, we take zero tolerance to any unlawful activity, whether it is a commercial or recreational fisher, and where required we will take enforcement action.

Mr SMITH: Director-General, can you please confirm if Fisheries and your officers have taken statements from recreational fishers who have made complaints to your department?

Mr Bolton: That is a very detailed question I am unable to answer right now, but I will seek to get you that advice before the end of the meeting.

Mr SMITH: Director-General, are you aware of threats, even death threats, being made against recreational fishers by commercial gillnet fishers in the Logan and Albert rivers?

Mr Bolton: I am not aware of any such threats. I would implore anyone that is subject to such behaviour to report that to the Queensland Police Service immediately. The department takes zero tolerance to physical threats or violence against anyone. We encourage all fishers—commercial and recreational—to act responsibly, and if anyone sees anything unlawful, please report that immediately to the Queensland Police Service.

Mr SMITH: Minister, have you met with any recreational fishers individually or as a body who have raised these concerns with you specifically as to the Logan and Albert rivers?

Mr PERRETT: I can confirm that I opened a show for the Australian Fishing Trade Association recently. There was a gentleman there as part of the crowd who was raising general issues; I confirm that. I will have to check with my office. I was at the AFTA trade show and there was a gentleman there that was concerned about this issue, hence why I will follow up further with the director-general to seek clarity about the legality. I think that is the important part of this because if it is illegal, then of course the full force of the law will come upon anyone. Critically, we need to establish between the N1 and N15 whether there was something that may have created a situation of an unintended consequence from that change.

Mr SMITH: Indeed, you did meet with one gentleman on the weekend. Minister, in terms of the correspondence your office has received with regard to gillnet fishing in the Logan and Albert rivers, how many responses has your office provided to each correspondence, or how many individuals who wrote that correspondence to you have you met with personally? I am happy if you want to come back on that later or take that question on notice.

Mr PERRETT: I am happy to answer that. I just indicated I was at the AFTA—

Mr SMITH: One person?

Mr PERRETT:—forum. There was certainly someone who raised that at that particular—I have committed to double-checking with my office in respect of any other correspondence that has come in and to getting that information to the member by the end of the session. Again, though, I raise the issue—seeking clarity, obviously, around N1 to N15 and whether there was. There has been, as I said, some suggestion that there may have been an unintended consequence with respect to this that may have provided the opportunity for some of this activity to take place that was never meant to—the change in early 2024 to some of the regulatory environment. I think an important part of this whole matter is establishing the legality or otherwise of the activity. I note that the member is raising issues around threats and the like and, of course, that is absolutely unacceptable. Any of that sort of activity needs to be reported immediately to the Queensland Police Service because, regardless, that is just completely unacceptable. Establishing the N1 and N15 crossover in respect of the regulatory change that took place in early 2024 is an important part of it.

Mr SMITH: Director-General, with reference to SDS page 1, can you provide a list of which recreational fishers were consulted in the process of forming the draft blueprint for Prosper 2050?

Mr Bolton: I am glad you asked about the draft blueprint. It really marks a different way of doing business for the department in particular. In the last week of February this year we pulled together nearly 280 stakeholders from across the entire portfolio. The key elements of that included the whole of agriculture, the commercial fishing and aquaculture sectors, the forestry sector and biosecurity. There was all levels of government. There was the supply chain and financial investors. Recreational fishers, from memory, were not there but there were commercial fishers represented there. That is not to diminish the value that commercial fishing brings to the state. We know that it contributes a little over \$333 million each year and supports about 23½ thousand jobs across the sector, but this was looking at primary production and the draft blueprint is about how we boost primary production, whereas recreational fishing is a part of the recreational sector, which does not get counted in that particular area.

Mr SPEAKER: I will go now to government members for questions.

Mr DALTON: Minister, government has a role in helping Queenslanders access freshly caught Queensland seafood. Can you provide advice on the importance of providing stability and security for our commercial fishing industry through balance in policy development and the rejection of kneejerk decisions about the industry?

Mr PERRETT: I thank the member for Mackay for the question. I know that the member is passionate about ensuring his constituents and all Queenslanders can access freshly caught Queensland seafood. The Crisafulli government understands that commercial fishers, processors and regional communities all rely on stable, fair and predictable policy settings to continue delivering high-quality locally caught Queensland seafood. One of our key priorities has been restoring confidence in the sector after years of uncertainty, poor consultation and reactive policy changes under the former government.

Commercial fishing is a multigenerational industry. It depends on long-term investment in vessels and equipment and quotas, and that investment only occurs when operators trust that the rules will not change without warning. Unfortunately, under the previous Labor government the sector experienced years of shifting regulations, blanket catch reductions and structural changes that often lacked transparency or industry input. By contrast, the Crisafulli government is taking a balanced and deliberate approach. We have removed the investment warnings that were suppressing growth. We have committed to full consultation on harvest strategies and quota changes. We have empowered the working groups to be a direct communication from government to industry but, most importantly, from industry to government. We believe that communication should be both ways—not just government imposing its views on industry.

In addition, we are progressing the development of a new Queensland seafood fishing plan as a part of our Prosper 2050 blueprint. This plan will set a clear whole-of-government vision for the future of the industry covering commercial, recreational and charter sectors. It will focus on improving access, certainty, promoting local seafood and streamlining regulation, ensuring sustainability and profitability through practical, evidence-based measures.

As a part of that work, we are also examining how to better promote to consumers Queensland caught and farmed seafood. This includes through addressing labelling and provenance issues to ensure our products are recognised and valued. Queenslanders want to eat Queensland seafood and this government is making that easier.

It is also important to reject the kind of kneejerk decisions that marked the former government's time. Too often, rules were changed abruptly or without proper evidence. That eroded trust, stifled business confidence and led to unnecessary conflict between user groups. Whether it was with sudden gear restrictions, unexplained quota shifts or the blanket approach to Spanish mackerel, Labor's pattern was 'reaction first and engagement later'—if at all. We are moving away from that model. We are making decisions based on data, advice and stakeholder input—not headlines or activist pressure. This does not mean avoiding difficult calls, but it does mean ensuring those decisions are explainable, defensible and developed in partnership with the industry and community.

The Crisafulli government is committed to supporting a thriving, secure, profitable and sustainable commercial fishing sector. We believe that Queenslanders should have access to local seafood and that the people who catch it deserve certainty. The Crisafulli government is delivering that certainty and working with industry—not against it—to secure its future.

Mr G KELLY: Minister, a key deliverable in the SDS on page 2 mentions the supply of quarry materials. Could you please outline how the LNP Crisafulli government is working to provide security for local governments, particularly those in Western Queensland, in relation to access to essential quarry materials?

Mr PERRETT: My department manages the allocation and sale of state owned quarry material through the granting of sales permits under the authority of the Forestry Act 1959. This material is crucial for rural and remote road maintenance and is relied on by many local governments to keep unsealed roads safe. State owned quarry material makes up 20 per cent of the total volume of Queensland's quarry output. As the member already mentioned, a key deliverable from this budget is that my department will ensure continuity of the supply of state owned quarry materials to local government agencies and commercial operators for local infrastructure, disaster recovery and regional economies.

Since coming into this role I have met with many of our western councils which have consistently raised access to quarry material as a key concern. I have taken this concern very seriously and it has become even clearer following the devastating flooding in Northern and Western Queensland, which

highlighted the importance of access to quarry materials for disaster recovery. This ensures that local governments have the necessary materials to quickly respond and support their communities to recover during and following emergency or disaster responses.

The bimonthly quarry material native title update meetings convened by the DPI have provided key local government representatives with a forum to engage directly with the department to discuss issues relating to state owned quarry material, access and native title. Local government representatives include the Local Government Association of Queensland, North West Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils, South West Regional Organisation of Councils, Far North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils and the Remote Area Planning and Development Board. DPI is also working very closely with local governments and native title parties to ensure continuity of quarry material supplied. This includes engaging directly with each relevant local government to clarify their future quarry pit requirements, undertake native title assessments and where necessary identify other valid options to access quarry material from alternative locations.

Before granting, varying or renewing a quarry sales permit, DPI must validate and address obligations under the federal government's Native Title Act and other legislation. In some cases consent from the relevant native title parties through an Indigenous land use agreement is needed to comply with the Native Title Act. As a result, there are situations where the department cannot issue or renew a quarry sales permit until an ILUA has been finalised. Negotiating an ILUA takes time. To ensure continuity of supply of state owned quarry material, DPI may enter into an interim agreement with native title parties while negotiations are underway. Currently, the department has entered into 17 interim agreements where ILUA negotiations progress. It has also been able to rely on some pre-existing ILUAs, often initiated by local governments that provide the necessary native title consent to grant or renew permits. To date, local governments have been able to maintain most of their required supply of state owned quarry material and approximately 88 per cent of the quarry pits required for future use by local governments and commercial operators have been renewed by the Department of Primary Industries.

Mr BENNETT: Minister, I refer to SDS page 1 regarding the impact of the varroa mite on the bee industry. Would the minister explain how the department is collaborating with industry and beekeepers to manage the impacts of varroa mite on Queensland's honey bee and pollination reliant industries?

Mr PERRETT: Again, I thank the member for Bundaberg for his question. I know the member has a strong interest in beekeeping.

Mr BENNETT: Burnett.

Mr PERRETT: Sorry, the member for Burnett. I know the member for Bundaberg does as well. I was thinking of the horticulture industry and I know both the members' electorates benefit from this, which is critically important to the horticultural industry as well as the production of honey products in this state. Varroa destructor has now been confirmed in Queensland. Following detections in the Lockyer Valley in March this year my department has moved to a management-based approach to dealing with varroa mite. This is consistent with a nationally agreed transition to management plan endorsed by all states and territories.

The department is working closely with beekeepers and the Queensland Beekeepers' Association to implement that plan in Queensland. This includes coordinated surveillance, reporting protocols, movement control and practical support for beekeepers to manage mite in the field. Current rules require all beekeepers in Queensland to undertake regular surveillance of their hives using alcohol wash or equivalent methods. Moving of bees, hives and related materials within Queensland is allowed without a permit provided full movement records are kept and made available to the department upon request. However, movements into Queensland from other jurisdictions where varroa is present, including New South Wales, Victoria and the ACT, remain subject to permit conditions issued by Biosecurity Queensland. These permits are issued on a case-by-case basis and include strict biosecurity safeguards such as pre-departure testing and secure transport. These controls remain in place to limit further spread of the mite while maintaining business continuity for operators who can meet biosecurity requirements.

Queensland continues to work in close coordination with other states and territories through national committees and through direct engagement with biosecurity agencies. That includes alignment of movement controls, sharing of surveillance data and cooperative planning for pollination continuity across state borders. In addition, the department has appointed dedicated varroa development officers who are working directly with industry to deliver on-ground training, extension and preparedness

activities. This includes practical support for integrated pest management, reporting compliance and movement documentation.

The Crisafulli government has also launched the \$500,000 Community Bee Innovation Fund to support education, monitoring and industry-led preparedness. Grants are available for local organisations, research groups and industry bodies to develop new tools, training programs and community-based surveillance models to help manage varroa mite and build long-term industry resilience. This is a complex national issue. Queensland is managing the risks locally while contributing constructively to a coordinated national response. We are working with industry every step of the way and ensuring that our approach is risk-based, practical and consistent with the national plan.

Mr DALTON: Would the minister explain how the department is working with industry through the development of the 25-year blueprint to deliver the government's goal of increasing the state's agricultural production to \$30 billion by 2030?

Mr PERRETT: I know that the government's goal in boosting Queensland's primary production output to \$30 billion by 2030 is important to the member's electorate and, as I indicated earlier, to all regional communities up and down the Queensland coast and, of course, into other parts of the state. The Crisafulli government understands and appreciates that primary industries do not operate in a vacuum. We know that many issues which impact our agriculture, forestry and fishing sectors are adjacent to my portfolio responsibilities. That is why the whole of government will take responsibility for our ambitious goal of \$30 billion in primary production output by 2030. To achieve this, it is important that I work closely with other ministers, especially the Minister for Water and the Minister for Energy.

I can confirm that the Crisafulli government has delivered on its commitment to retain the Agriculture Energy and Water Council. Through the council, industry leaders are helping shape policy and partnership with our government. The work of the council will also support the implementation of the co-designed, 25-year blueprint Primary Industries Prosper 2050 and the associated five-year action plans. The council provides a vital opportunity for whole-of-government and stakeholder leaders to identify, define and resolve opportunities, challenges and actions on matters critical to the sector. The council will work collaboratively across government and industry to find and support solutions for the growth and prosperity of Queensland's primary industries sector, noting the critical roles of water and energy in supporting these outcomes.

The key stakeholders involved in the Agriculture, Energy and Water Council are AgForce, Queensland Canegrowers, Cotton Australia, Queensland Farmers' Federation and the Queensland Fruit & Vegetable Growers. The first council meeting was held on 27 May 2025 here in Brisbane to discuss workforce and skills, disaster funding, biosecurity, irrigation discounts, energy tariffs and prime agricultural land. The next council meeting is scheduled to be held, again here in Brisbane, on 6 November 2025. Importantly, other industry bodies and government departments can be invited to present on specific issues in the future.

Mr SPEAKER: I will go to non-government members. Member for Bundaberg.

Mr SMITH: Director-General, I return to our line of questioning around recreational fishing and the 2050 prosper draft blueprint. You mentioned that recreational fishers were not specifically involved in that process because you wanted a more commercial direction. Was that direction provided to the department by the minister?

Mr Bolton: I clarify for the member that the recreational sector was not involved in the drafting, preparation or co-design of the draft blueprint. Since that point in time we have engaged in a whole-of-state consultation process. Recreational fishers have certainly engaged through that process. In fact, we have had more than 3,200 people engage on that. To be clear, again this is the primary industries portfolio. The recreational fishers—while they make a significant contribution of more than \$330 million each year to the economy—are not captured under the definition of primary production.

Mr SMITH: Director-General, how is the department incorporating the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy into the fisheries action plan?

Mr Bolton: The Sustainable Fisheries Strategy is nearing its completion. There are three items or actions that are left over, and that includes the preparation of harvest strategies for the rocky reef fishery and the Gulf of Carpentaria fishery and examining a policy position of the former government around a beneficiary-pays fee system. The two harvest strategies will be continued and will be delivered as per normal or business as usual as part of our core business, and the question around a beneficiary-pays licence system is a policy decision of the previous government and is not part of the current framework.

Mr SMITH: Noting the previous statements around the Spanish mackerel biomass, Director-General, is the department committed to the 60 per cent biomass target outlined in the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy moving forward?

Mr Bolton: As the minister has said, the department and the government are very much wedded to backing science-based decision-making. The harvest strategy—and in particular section 9.2.1 of the harvest strategy—talks about target reference limits. It recommends that a reference level of 60 per cent be set for maximum economic yield as a proxy where a more specific estimate is not available. With regard to the Spanish mackerel fishery, we now have detailed science, particularly off the back of the revised stock assessment. We have independent expert scientific advice that recommends—and we are supporting—that maximum economic yield dropping down to 48 per cent.

Mr SMITH: Director-General, based on that, was the previous stock assessment of Spanish mackerel based on incorrect science and data?

Mr Bolton: What I can confirm is that the previous stock assessment was based on the best science available at that time. Since then there were two independent reviews undertaken—one undertaken by Dr Neil Klaer which was commissioned by the department and a further commissioned by the Queensland Seafood Industry Association. Both of those independent reviews made a number of recommendations that could strengthen that particular stock assessment. All of those recommendations were adopted. A revised stock assessment model was developed and the current results are at 34 per cent.

Mr SMITH: Director-General, which other species in their stock assessments will be under review through the department, based on this new science?

Mr Bolton: The department has a specified program of stock assessments that we undertake, and they range from every two years out to every four years, depending on the species. I do not have the exact list here in front of me but we could certainly provide that—hopefully by the end of the session—but, basically, stocks are managed on a risk basis. Some stocks like coral trout are sitting at about 63 per cent, which is above that target point of 60 per cent, so for us there is less of a critical concern. Other areas such as Spanish mackerel we will review more regularly, as we have done recently, to make sure that the rebuilding efforts that have been put in place are having an effect and that we are not unnecessarily overregulating the fishery which impacts on commercial fishers and recreational fishers.

Mr SMITH: Minister, you are clearly aware of the new scientific method the department has said it has put forward to reassess the stock assessment of Spanish mackerel. Have you directed the department to review the stock assessment of any other species?

Mr PERRETT: Of course we take a science-based approach to what we do, and I made it very clear in the lead-up to last year's state election that we will be making decisions based on science, not based on anything else. There has been no direction to the minister with respect to that. I acknowledge the work that was undertaken under the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy, which, I think, dated back to 2014, to an MRAG review that took place at the time. I know that in some of the discussions that I had with the former minister it was never about the work that was done back then, even though the former minister made certain suggestions to me about matters; it was always about the implementation. Clearly, I understood that the bulk of that work had been done under the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy 2017-2027, and everything that we do in terms of our decisions is based on science, and that is clear.

Sustainable fisheries are critical. In terms of managing the fisheries from a government perspective, the industries—whether they are commercial fishers, whether they are recreational fishers, whether they are charter boat fishers—need to have confidence that the government is making decisions based on science, with no preconceived positions, and I certainly made that clear. The mackerel fishery, as mentioned by the director-general, is one of those. Sixty per cent is what had been set under the previous government—advice and a position which made a lot of sense—but the advice has now come forward with respect to particularly the Spanish mackerel fishery that it is critical.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, I am happy with the answer.

Mr PERRETT: Everything that we do in this space needs to be based on science and it is around sustainability, because that is what our commercial fishers need, it is what our recreational fishers need and it is what our charter boat operators need. They need confidence in government.

Mr SMITH: Director-General, can you confirm that the east inshore scallop fishery will not reopen until the stock reaches 30 per cent?

Mr Bolton: That is one of the next species that we are undertaking a new stock assessment on. One of the outcomes of the revised Spanish mackerel stock assessment was that there are a number of improvements we can make to our stock assessment modelling, and that is going to be included within the scallops. The next stage is we are looking at undertaking a survey later this year with industry, and we are working very closely with industry to co-design what that survey will look like. That survey and the catch rates and the catch outcomes from that survey will be inputs into the next stock assessment and, depending on what that outcome is, we will be making recommendations to the minister at that point in time. I cannot predetermine—I cannot pre-empt—the outcomes of the survey and, secondly, the advice that we might give to the minister in response to that assessment.

Mr SMITH: I would not mind taking the odds. Director-General, are the department and the government planning to develop a new harvest strategy?

Mr Bolton: Is that with regard to the scallop fishery?

Mr SMITH: With regard to the harvest strategy itself. To give a little bit of context around this, recreational fishers this afternoon have raised their concerns that if the Spanish mackerel biomass is to drop from 60 per cent to 48 per cent then a whole new harvest strategy must be accommodating of each species. Is it the direction of the minister to the department to engage in the formation of a new harvest strategy?

Mr Bolton: There are two parts to that answer, if I have your question correct. The first part is that we will be revising the Spanish mackerel harvest strategy off the back of the stock assessment outcomes and looking at that maximum economic yield target and reducing that from 60 per cent to 48 per cent. There will be a minimum of 28 days consultation on that, and all parts of the community will have an opportunity to have their say on that revised or amended harvest strategy. There has been no direction from the minister to amend or otherwise change any other harvest strategy.

Mr SMITH: Director-General, will recreational fishers be a part of the review into any future stock assessments?

Mr Bolton: Recreational fishers are a key component of what we are doing with the management of the Spanish mackerel fishery. They will be involved with the management of any of our other fisheries. If we were to make future amendments—and I am very much speculating here, because there is no decision or no direction to amend any other harvest strategy—there is a compulsory period of consultation so that all members of the community, whether they are commercial, recreational or even traditional fishers, will be able to have their say on any proposed changes before a decision is made by the minister.

Mr SMITH: Minister, does the government remain committed to phasing out gillnet fishing in the Great Barrier Reef by 2027 in line with commitments under UNESCO?

Mr PERRETT: There has been no change with respect to that. I am cognisant of the federal government's role within this, in particular around the requirements that they impose on the state. I have made that clear in any discussions I have with industry sectors regarding it. Of course you get all sorts of opinions about what can and cannot happen, but again I understand the role that the federal government has and I have made it abundantly clear to anyone who raises it with me that the federal government set a lot of those rules around that and we work with the federal government and raise any issues that are raised. That is what happens between governments. I am sure that may have happened previously. There has been no change to any of that.

Mr SMITH: You remain committed?

Mr PERRETT: There has been nothing put in front of me to suggest that there is going to be any change. The commitments that were put in place with respect to the reef and the issues with that, and I am absolutely aware of those, the federal government take a very keen interest in those matters. Again, if there are any issues I will certainly raise them with the federal minister, but there has been no suggestion of any change.

Mr SMITH: And there will not be?

Mr PERRETT: With respect to the current situation there cannot be any change. It is what it is. That is the reality of what it is. I have made it abundantly clear to anyone who raises those issues that the federal government have a significant hand around certain components of our fishery. We rely on export permits. The federal government rightly put those in place. They are important to our fisheries and they are based around sustainability and of course we are going to meet those because we do not want a situation where we have commercial fishers or others that are invested into the industry that then have a situation where they do not have continuity going forward. That is why the sustainability of

fisheries is critically important and particularly working with the federal government to shore up and secure those export permits. I know the department did some great work around sea cucumbers recently to protect our economic value.

Mr SMITH: Speaker, I am happy with the answer.

Mr PERRETT: Well, in that space. There has been mention of UNESCO. There has been a lot of good work that has happened in that space and we will continue to make certain that we meet our minimum obligations.

Mr SMITH: Director-General, has economic modelling been done whilst establishing your new biomass targets for Spanish mackerel?

Mr Bolton: The purpose of our stock assessments and biomass targets around the management of the fishery itself is to make sure it is sustainable for now and into the future. Maximum economic yield is the point at which the most efficient way of fishing can occur for the population of fish. That is certainly part of the modelling we undertake in setting that.

Mr SMITH: Perhaps you could enlighten us with what were some of the outcomes that came through that economic modelling in relation to dropping the biomass to 48 per cent for Spanish mackerel. What is the economic benefit to the commercial industry?

Mr Bolton: This comes back to the biology of the fish in particular. Spanish mackerel are fast growing. They reproduce fairly quickly, which means that they can support a higher level of commercial or recreational take. Setting biomass at 48 per cent means that we do not have to wait as long to rebuild to 60 per cent. This is off the back of the science which looks at things such as steepness which talks about how fast and how well they reproduce and bounce back from pressures. It means that fishers can go out there and catch more fish with less effort.

Mr SMITH: When the survey of the eastern shore scallops is undertaken and the review of their biomass and stock assessment, will there be economic modelling attached to that as well?

Mr Bolton: Certainly as part of the stock assessment we will be looking at the biology of the species and looking at some of those key findings that were relevant to the Spanish mackerel independent reviews and revised stock assessment and seeing whether or not we need to review, off the back of science—always backed by science—the biomass target for scallops. They are also a relatively short-lived species. They live about five years, reach sexual maturity in about two years. It may support a lower target, but at this point in time again I cannot pre-empt the outcome of the stock assessment and the science and the analysis of that survey.

Mr SMITH: Director-General, how much direct investment in this budget has gone into Queensland's beef industry?

Mr Bolton: I want to acknowledge the importance of the Queensland beef industry. It is our largest commodity. It is worth \$6.065 billion each year. In relation to export values, it is our single biggest export. Our beef and veal exports are worth about \$6.732 billion—I think I might have got that first figure wrong. In terms of processing businesses, it supports about 22,316 individual businesses and employs more than 29,000 people. In terms of the broader budget, \$817 million is the budget appropriation for the department. A key element of that is looking at how we develop the beef industry through Prosper 2050 and the regional-based action plans, including the \$30 million sowing the seeds fund. In addition to that, a key component of safeguarding growing the beef industry is around biosecurity and making sure we are protecting our existing investments from diseases such as foot and mouth disease and lumpy skin disease but also looking at how we can use that great investment of the \$50 million and the 100 extra biosecurity officers to maintain that investment.

Mr SMITH: I appreciate your answer. Thank you. Minister, you made your declaration earlier. I am wondering if you have sought advice from the Integrity Commissioner, if you have a conflict management plan in place and if you will table it before the committee.

Mr SPEAKER: Can you table it, Minister?

Mr PERRETT: I have made the relevant declarations, as I always have, particularly when I was sitting in the same chair as you were. I was always very cognisant around that. Yes, I have sought Integrity Commissioner advice. I am not sure that is something that I would table. That is about a management plan.

Mr SMITH: But there is a conflict management plan?

Mr PERRETT: I have sought Integrity Commissioner advice around matters that relate to my role as a farmer, as a beef producer, as someone who actually sits in this role and I am cognisant of those so I am always very careful to make sure I make the necessary declarations around this because I do not want any suggestion that there is anything other than that.

Mr SPEAKER: We will now go to government members. Member for Mirani.

Mr G KELLY: 2025 has seen primary producers right across our state hit by severe flooding and natural disasters. Would you explain how the government has been able to advocate for key changes within the federal government disaster guidelines, in particular to the definition of a primary producer and what this means in terms of accessing assistance?

Mr PERRETT: I know the member for Mirani is very interested in ensuring primary producers can access assistance following natural disasters. As everyone here would know, we have had three natural disasters this year across the north, west and south-east. The scale of impacts on primary producers across Queensland during the 2024-25 disaster zone was immense.

The first flooding disaster occurred in our state's north in late January and early February following the North and Far North Queensland tropical low event. This event affected approximately 3,190 producers, resulting in agricultural production losses estimated to exceed \$816 million. In March, Tropical Cyclone Alfred hit the south-east corner of the state affecting 7,370 producers, causing an estimated \$2.14 billion in agricultural production losses across 16 activated local government areas. Between late March and early May, our communities in the far west were hit with extreme flooding through the Western Queensland surface trough event. This event affected around 646 producers, with damages to agricultural production estimated at \$592 million across nine activated local government areas. That flood inundated more than half a million square kilometres, an area twice the size of Victoria.

As soon as possible after each event, I visited each of those areas to speak with affected primary producers. I have also returned to those regions on several occasions to see how the recovery is going. Importantly, we have worked with the Australian government to drive changes to the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements that will directly benefit producers impacted by disaster.

Firstly, category C and category D extraordinary disaster assistance recovery grants now include replanting of lost crops. The change was made in response to grower feedback to the Queensland government which identified the exclusion of replanting activities from grant eligibility as a significant gap in disaster support. This enables growers whose crops have been damaged or destroyed by natural disasters to access a grant to replant lost or damaged plants with the same or comparable crops; purchase plants, seed, seedlings, root or tube stock and tissue cultures; purchase chemicals for weed and/or pest control; and purchase establishment fertiliser.

We also listened closely to industry and achieved what the former government could not: a change to the definition of 'primary producer'. These changes address longstanding concerns raised by emerging and young primary producers, contract harvesters and other agricultural support service providers who were significantly affected by recent disaster events but ineligible for assistance. The revised definition will be applied retrospectively to events over the 2024-25 disaster season, ensuring broad access to recovery support. The definition now includes producers whose income may include any of the following agricultural support services: aerial crop spraying or dusting, aerial mustering, aerial pest control or baiting, aerial seeding services, aerial top-dressing, aquaculture support services, artificial insemination services, crop harvesting, dairy herd testing, farm irrigation services, fertiliser spreading including aerial, fishing support services, fruit or vegetable picking, hay or silage baling or pressing, livestock dipping, livestock drafting or droving, seed grading or cleaning, and wool classing including reclassing and bulk classing.

Dr ROWAN: Minister, can you please outline how the Department of Primary Industries is advancing scientifically backed research for the future of Queensland's food and fibre production?

Mr PERRETT: I know that the member has a strong interest in advancing science and the use of scientific research to assist food and fibre production. As you would be aware, the Crisafulli government has set an ambitious target to boost Queensland's primary industries output to \$30 billion by 2030. Key to this will be our investment in research, development and extension as a driver in productivity growth in the primary industries sector. This includes fast-tracking the development and adoption of ag tech for technology and supply chain performance. What many of you may not be aware of is that, within the Queensland government, the DPI is the second largest research, development and extension investor

behind Queensland Health. In 2025-26, the department will manage RDE budget investments of almost \$150 million. To give an idea of the breadth of our RDE investments, I would like to share with you three case studies that showcase just a portion of the amazing work being done by our Primary Industries scientists and extension officers. The first is in relation to mung bean research.

The National Mungbean Improvement Program is a joint investment with the Grains Research and Development Corporation, the GRDC. The DPI has leveraged its investment of \$4.76 million for a further \$3.58 million from the GRDC, to give a total project value of \$8.34 million. The program recently launched two new varieties, Brolga and Kookaburra, with its commercialisation partner, the Australian Mungbean Association. With a 10 per cent average yield gain, improved grain quality and disease resistance, it is forecast that grower farmgate profit will increase by up to 15 per cent with these new varieties. The introduction of the superior varieties is expected to further cement Queensland's position as the leading supplier of premium mung beans to international markets.

In aquaculture, the department has partnered with the Queensland oyster-farming industry to support the existing industry in South-East Queensland and to promote expansion to other parts of the state. The DPI has invested \$1.122 million and leveraged a further \$518,000 in Fishery Research and Development Corporation funding. The DPI has developed new hatchery procedures that have successfully closed the life cycle of two species of endemic tropical rock oysters, the black-lip rock oyster and the Queensland sunshine oyster. Both the black-lip rock oyster and the Queensland sunshine oyster are highly resistant to the QX disease, grow substantially faster than the Sydney rock oyster and are tolerant of high temperatures, meaning that the Queensland industry can diversify beyond producing the Sydney rock oyster in South-East Queensland. It is good news for those who love eating oysters.

In the biosecurity field and in support of our cattle industry, we have the cattle cam project. In this project, the DPI has partnered with the ag tech industry to help safeguard Queensland's most valuable agricultural sector, the beef industry. Through this collaboration, the DPI has invested \$1.25 million to deliver remote surveillance, using an artificial intelligence project also known as cattle cam. This innovative project utilises artificial intelligence and cameras mounted on a bespoke mobile platform to enhance biosecurity by identifying signs of emergency animal diseases such as foot-and-mouth disease and lumpy skin disease, which pose significant threats to the industry. Additionally, the technology supports producers in managing endemic challenges including buffalo fly infestations, improving animal health and productivity.

In addition to the DPI's internal advancement of RDE, we are also partnering with universities. Strategic investments in university alliances generate research and jobs, and develop needed scientific skills and expertise, providing a foundation for innovative, future focused solutions for Queensland's primary industries sector. In 2025-26, the DPI will fund \$9.723 million for RDE through university alliances. This comprises \$9.16 million with the University of Queensland through the Queensland Alliance for Agriculture and Food Innovation in a research collaboration between the University of Queensland and the Department of Primary Industries, working together on key agricultural industry challenges. It also comprises \$561,500 with the University of Southern Queensland through the Broadacre Cropping Initiative to conduct research, development and extension activities.

Mr G KELLY: Minister, can you outline how you and the department are working with industry to support the future of the agricultural industry through ag tech?

Mr PERRETT: I know the member has a passion for the future of the agricultural industries, which are very important to his electorate of Mirani. I have been to that electorate on a couple of occasions now, and it is always good to be there. Emerging ag tech and primary industries innovation offer extraordinary opportunities to boost and grow primary industries production to \$30 billion by 2030. The Crisafulli government's vision is for Queensland to be a world leader in ag tech and innovation. This state is already positioning itself to be the go-to destination for ag tech development and adoption. Our farmers are exploring ag tech options to improve productivity, whether it is saving on inputs, growing better crops or producing better genetics.

Innovation and technology cannot be superficial buzz words. They must be seen as tools to grow industry. My department collaborates closely with producers to ensure they have access to fit-for-purpose technologies, rigorously testing them in real-world farming and production environments to drive and support industry adoption. The Australian Farm Institute estimates that the uptake of digital technologies alone could lift the gross value of production of the Australian agricultural sector by more than \$20 billion annually.

In February the Queensland government was the host state partner of AgriFutures evokeAG 2025, which was held here in Brisbane. This was alongside host city partner the Brisbane Economic Development Agency and platinum partner Elders. AgriFutures Australia evokeAG is the premier annual agrifood tech and innovation event in the Asia-Pacific. This year's event provided an unparalleled global platform to showcase Queensland's world-leading ag tech and innovation, talented people and services and research infrastructure as well as the quality and diversity of the state's agricultural industries.

The event attracted a record number of approximately 2,000 delegates from 25 countries to Brisbane. It consisted of 201 international delegates from 25 countries and 1,756 delegates from around Australia, of which 46 per cent were from Queensland. Compared to the 2024 event, the number of primary producers who attended increased by 26 per cent to 347. A total of 57 sideline events and activities were delivered—six led by the Department of Primary Industries.

The sideline programs showcased the groundbreaking Queensland ecosystem comprising landholders, businesses, universities and governments across the state. A Team Queensland approach ensured the event and sideline programs demonstrated our collaborative approach, which created impact. As part of evokeAG, I was also proud to announce the new Liz Alexander Bursary in honour of Liz Alexander, who was a trailblazer in agricultural innovation. The bursary will cover the cost of an ag tech leader to attend a future evokeAG forum.

In April 2025 we also announced the Global AgInvesting conference will be coming to Queensland in June 2026. It is the world's premier agriculture investing conference. Brisbane will be the fourth host location globally, along with New York, London and Tokyo. The event will help to position Queensland as the investment gateway to the Indo-Pacific region. This conference will drive connections between institutional investors, fund managers and agribusiness leaders, providing them with new investment opportunities into ag tech infrastructure and sustainable agriculture. These events offer opportunities for the Queensland government to engage with stakeholders and to progress how ag tech will help boost primary industry production to \$30 billion by 2030 and attract further investment to the state.

Mr SPEAKER: We will have one more question from government members before we swap back.

Mr DALTON: Will the minister outline how Queensland's strong agricultural trade relationship underpins the viability of the agricultural sector and the importance of trade to help reach the goal of \$30 billion by 2030?

Mr PERRETT: Again, I know the member is passionate about maintaining strong trade relationships, which are pivotal to ensuring the world-class produce which Queensland is renowned for is showcased and delivered across the world. Ministerial trade and investment missions provide an important opportunity to reinforce relationships with international governments and businesses as well as support visits from international delegations. A prime example is AgriFutures evokeAG 2025, which was held in Brisbane earlier this year. My department supported delegations from India, Vietnam, Taiwan, China and Singapore to evokeAG 2025, which is considered the Asia-Pacific's premier ag tech event.

In June this year I led a trade and investment mission to Japan and South Korea with current and emerging agrifood exporters, with the support of Trade and Investment Queensland. During the mission, I attended the Osaka expo and the Seoul Food and Hotel trade show and met with key investors, including Lotte International and CJ CheilJedang. The visit to the Osaka expo, for which the Queensland government was a gold sponsor, coincided with Queensland Day. At the expo, I hosted a Taste of Queensland luncheon for local business representatives which showcased Queensland produce, including beef, lamb, finger limes and lemon myrtle tea. I saw firsthand how Queensland's fresh and packaged food, including beef, fruit, vegetables, honey, nuts and beverages, are so highly valued in the Japanese market. The delegation of businesses I led were able to develop their trade connections to increase their share in the Japanese and South Korean markets, which included showcasing their produce at the Seoul Food and Hotel trade show in South Korea.

While in Japan, I engaged with key business partners to explore their interest in Queensland. I am pleased to confirm they see us as a trusted partner. Japan continues to have an interest in renewable fuels, and they see collaborative research and development partnerships with Queensland as vital to progressing this opportunity. Interest in the biofuels industry and Queensland's ability to

develop feedstock such as Pongamia, tallow and oil seed crops may help kickstart a new industry to help fuel the heavy industries.

Our timber research and innovation is of great interest. As we develop the Queensland Future Timber Plan, we are still looking to identify opportunities to increase our timber manufacturing capacity in a sustainable way that also maximises the use of processing residues. Local equity partners may play a role in the expansion of our timber plantations, and this is something that could be explored further at the Global AgInvesting conference in Brisbane in June 2026.

The strength of our relationship with key businesses in South Korea was highlighted through the positive sentiment expressed towards our beef. It was also pleasing to know that Queensland macadamias, citrus, carrots and mangos can be found on the menu in South Korea throughout the year. Given current geopolitical uncertainty, I reaffirmed the clear opportunity Queensland offers to establish larger and longer term agreements as a trusted and reliable provider of premium-quality safe and sustainable food and fibre.

Lotte International continue to invest in their Sandalwood Feedlot here in Queensland. I will make a point of visiting the feedlot to confirm our relationship and commitment to promoting beef exports, including Lotte wagyu beef. The processing plant in Toowoomba is innovatively creating a beef bone extract to produce bone broth to export to South Korea. Bone broth is a staple in many Korean dishes. This provides high-growth potential for further Korean cuisine in Queensland and around the world. All these trade opportunities directly lead to more investment opportunities and higher paid jobs for Queenslanders, particularly those in our rural and regional communities.

Mr SPEAKER: I will go to non-government members. I believe the member for Traeger has a question.

Mr KATTER: I have a few questions here. The SDS refers to partnering up to maintain a skilled and agile primary industries workforce. With 50 per cent of Queensland's agricultural industry leaders being graduates from ag colleges—and being mindful that the extraordinary decision was taken to close Longreach and Emerald—what advice has the minister been given about maintaining those numbers in light of those closures over the years?

Mr PERRETT: I acknowledge the challenge around workforce training. Many of our industries—and not just our rural industries—are certainly struggling with that. The member may be aware that the assets around Longreach and Emerald have been sold. They no longer exist in the department. Certainly, Berrigurra, the property that was linked to the Emerald Agricultural College, was sold by the former government. The interest in the Longreach Pastoral College was divested by the former government.

The issue the member raises is raised regularly. We work closely with the industry. Industry are working on plans and in a lot of cases they are investing themselves. I am cognisant of this issue. We work directly with the Queensland Farmers' Federation and the Queensland Agriculture Workforce Network on this. It is something that we are committed to working with industry on to find solutions.

The nature of the workforce required in rural industries is changing somewhat. There are still the traditional methods like grabbing a crowbar and a shovel or grabbing a chainsaw, and they are still important components, but particularly around ag tech there is significant interest in being able to develop further skills. We are seeing that driven by industry. In a lot of cases, industry has taken the lead.

We have some good examples—member, you may have them in your region; I certainly have them my mine—in our state education system of ag programs. I quite often use the example of Gympie State High School's ag program that links directly with industry. Industry partners offer certificates. I had a meeting with a private school in the Central Queensland region earlier this year where they informed me that they are now offering diploma courses up to year 12. They are really embracing it. There is a lot of collaboration between education providers—particularly state and private schools—and industry to drive that change. I am confident that that will be the case. I commit to continuing to work with the sectors to find those solutions.

Mr KATTER: Director-General, people ask all the time about how many biosecurity officers we have. In the country where I live, it is always wobbly whether the Cloncurry office is manned or not. The cape and the gulf are the front line for threats coming down from Indonesia and Papua New Guinea. Can you give any commitment or feedback on how many officers will be positioned in the gulf or Cape York?

Mr Bolton: We have already recruited 13 of the 100 FTEs that have been identified by the new government. The first three of those were regional leads—senior officers based in the northern, central and southern regions. Those biosecurity leads are now working with local governments to understand the priorities across those particular regions and looking at what the response should be, including where staff should be located. We are looking to try to tailor the recruitment of the remaining 100 FTEs in response to the particular risks in the particular regions.

With regard to the cape, that is something that we are turning our minds to. As the minister may have mentioned, part of one of the election commitments is to undertake an independent review of the closure of the Coen biosecurity facility. That is currently underway. Once we get the outcomes of that and the minister has been briefed on that, we will be looking at what those opportunities are moving forward, and in particular what the response might be to ensure we have the right level of biosecurity response on the cape.

Mr KATTER: Minister, I will bundle my questions to be more efficient with time, because it is same the question at the end of the day. They say there are six million hectares of prickly acacia. It is said that 70 per cent of the estimated 2.3 million pig population, which is something like 1.6 million pigs, needs to be killed every year. Siam weed, navua sedge, giant rats tail grass, grader grass—pick your weed, they are exploding everywhere. They are a big problem—a seemingly insurmountable problem. The funding from the federal government has probably gone in the wrong direction in the last five years. It seems ominous and difficult. Bundling those biosecurity issues—weeds and feral pests—what is the response to those? Are they identified as a problem?

Mr SPEAKER: Minister, I am warning you that we have 10 minutes left. I can hardly see the director-general for the pile of sticky notes. We have a lot of questions on notice to go through. If you could answer the question without making it too long, it would be appreciated. We have a bit to get through.

Mr PERRETT: Thank you, Mr Speaker, for that guidance. I certainly understand the issues raised by the member for Traeger. They are becoming increasingly challenging—all the weeds and the feral animals. Part of the challenge we have in dealing with some of them currently is that nowhere in the state is drought-declared. Thankfully, we are getting good seasons, but great seasons aid feral pig numbers and the spread of so many of these weeds. They are significant ongoing challenges to this state, to production and to the viability of properties in some cases.

From a departmental perspective, the research work that we are doing at the Ecosciences Precinct around some of the invasive weeds that the member mentioned is critical. In some cases, biological control is the only chance we have given the areas they are located and the impact they are having on producers. Giant rats tail grass—I know you mentioned that—is a massive issue right up the east coast. So many properties are battling it. I know there is some significantly good work going on. I have seen it firsthand at the Ecosciences Precinct. The trouble is, particularly with giant rats tail grass, ensuring you do not get unintended consequences from the biological controls. We know of a number of those in this state. Probably cane toads come to mind for most people, but there are many of them.

We are certainly aware of the issue. We are always happy to engage, look for opportunities and work with industry around those challenges and make certain that the departmental application to issues is what it needs to be. I am cognisant of the time. I am looking at the clock and the Speaker is getting a little restless in his seat.

Mr SPEAKER: If we have time for another question after we do this, we will. I think we better go through the questions on notice. Director-General, could you start with some of the questions on notice?

Mr Bolton: In response to the member for Bundaberg's question regarding UNESCO and whether or not changing the Spanish mackerel maximum economic yield would be in contravention of that, I can advise the member that, on 25 May 2023, the then Australian minister for environment wrote to UNESCO providing an undertaking on behalf of the Australian and Queensland governments on a range of matters to respond to their concerns with regard to the Great Barrier Reef marine World Heritage area. Those matters included water quality, fisheries and climate change.

With respect to fisheries, in particular, there were five specific matters that were mentioned or undertakings given. One of those included finalising the outstanding harvest strategies and working towards the target maximum economic yield. I do note in brackets it had 60 per cent. Of relevance to that, under the *Queensland harvest strategy policy*, section 9.2.1 sets that a maximum economic yield of 60 per cent should be used as a proxy 'where a more specific estimate is not available'. For Spanish

mackerel, we now have a very good estimate on what that maximum economic yield should be, being 48 per cent. We are of the view that, should that be appropriately determined and implemented as an appropriate maximum economic yield, it is in alignment with the undertaking provided to UNESCO.

With regard to the member for Traeger, I know that he also indicated that he did not necessarily need an answer but he spoke about cattle numbers on the cape. I can confirm that the numbers in 2014-15 were 90,000. Then the numbers in 2019-20 had dropped to 64,200. I note also that the statewide herd at that same time in 2014-15 was 11.17 million and in 2019-20 it was 10.4 million. There appears to have been an overall drop across not only the cape but the rest of the state which might indicate there were other seasonal rainfall patterns that might have affected that and not just be specific to the cape.

In regard to the honourable member for Woodridge and his question with regard to Bega, I want to note that the media did report the Bega Group was looking to review the future of the Kingaroy facility in June 2024. Representatives from my department and the department of state development have had a number of meetings including in relation to impacts on growers. There will be further engagement with stakeholders, and that will be accommodated as required or requested by either the growers or the company representatives.

In response to the member for Bundaberg with regard to unlawful net fishing within South-East Queensland, I can confirm that there have been 31 pieces of incoming correspondence to the minister's office. There have been none to the department. As the minister indicated in his response to the question, the minister has requested the department undertake an investigation into the issues behind that including the decisions that were made in the establishment of the N15 fishery and whether or not that has had unintended consequences. Once we have finished that investigation and briefed the minister, I would imagine—I cannot speak on behalf of the minister—the minister will be in a position to respond to those people who have written to him.

With regard to the member for Bundaberg's question about stock assessments, the next priority of fisheries to have a new stock assessment taken is the saucer scallop, the spanner crab and the blue swimmer crab, followed by the east coast saddletail snapper, the eastern king prawn, the sea cucumber and mullet. By my undertaking, that is all of the questions on notice.

Mr SPEAKER: That is very well done. We still are a couple of minutes left. Member for Stretton, you have a question.

Mr MARTIN: Minister, in your role as primary industries minister, are you aware of any plans to change reef regulations in Queensland?

Mr PERRETT: I thank the member for Stretton for his question. It is a very good question. I am unaware of any changes. Importantly—and I want to back in our primary industries here—some really great work has been done over a long period of time directly with industry, and in a lot of cases industry has taken the lead, in and around reef regulations.

Mr MARTIN: It was a good question but not a great answer. You have already said this. The clock is ticking here.

Mr PERRETT: I was just getting to best management practice. I want to give the industry a shout-out about best management practice and the work they have done in that across so many industries. It is worthy of note, member.

Mr MARTIN: Minister, are you committed to continue funding the Food Farmers' Commissioner?

Mr PERRETT: That is another great question. I was expecting that one from the member for Bundaberg given that he was on the committee. I think we were both on the committee. We conducted the work with respect to that. There was great frustration sometimes. I think the member for Bundaberg probably got the issues a little bit better than a couple of his colleagues on a couple of occasions in that supermarket inquiry.

Mr SMITH: I support the commissioner.

Mr PERRETT: However, I note that there was legislative change in the parliament which of course we supported. We respect that. I have met with the Food Farmers' Commissioner, I think, on three occasions at least. Well, I certainly have. With the work that he is doing I think he has an important role.

I note that he was only appointed for 12 months by the former government. I think that comes to an end towards the end of September, from memory. It was only a 12-month appointment by the former government. I think there is provision within the legislation to appoint that person for three years. That is obviously under active consideration at the moment. Certainly the discussions that I have had with Mr Burke have been fruitful. I know that a lot of the work he will need to do not only here in this state but, in particular, federally is important work for the state. We will certainly make an announcement on that as we move forward. He is still currently in that contract as per the previous government's 12-month commitment to it.

Mr SPEAKER: We only have about five seconds left, so I do not think there is any point in going any further with questions. We have now reached the end of the time allocated to examine the proposed expenditure for the primary industries portfolio area. Thank you, Minister, Director-General, officials and departmental officers for your attendance. That concludes this hearing of estimates for the Primary Industries and Resources Committee for 2025. I would like to thank the committee members and the visiting members who participated in the hearing. Thank you also to Hansard and the parliamentary broadcast staff, together with all of the other parliamentary staff who have assisted here today. I declare the hearing closed.

The committee adjourned at 5.45 pm.